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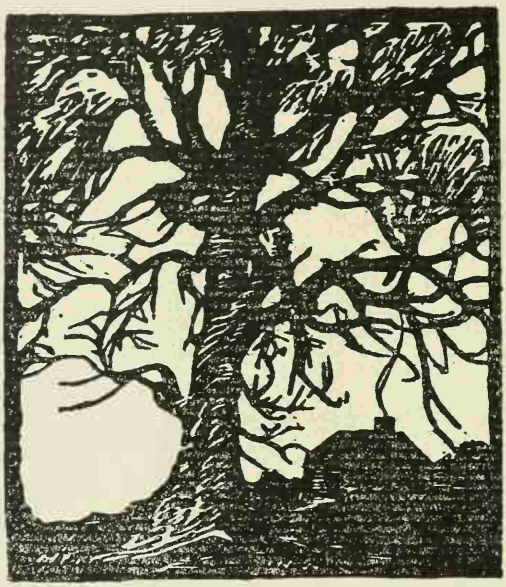

Woodcut by Margaret Whittemore

PATIENCE

By Edna Becker

Oh, the patience of a tree,
The calm assurance as it waits
The seasons through unfalteringly
Above our petty loves and hates,
Watching slow years come and go—
Surely from it we can know
Something of eternity.

HROTSVITHA
THE NUN OF GANDERSHEIM

A. D. 930? 935?—1005?

By John Heard

"Rara avis in Saxonia visa est."—Henricus Bodo.

From the high watermark which the dramatists of Classic Greece attained, the art of playwriting slowly but surely declined throughout the glorious age of Roman supremacy until, after the days of Terence, it deteriorated into a state which the Fathers of the Church termed only a description of "the shrines of Venus; the factories of crime; the schools of scandal." If such were its feelings, it was but natural that as soon as the Church gained a position of power in the Empire, it should do its utmost to abolish all dramatic performances. And yet, it is not to Christianity that must be laid the responsibility for the almost complete demise of the theatre which justified, at least generally speaking, the freely accepted *cliché* that in Europe there was no drama from the Sixth to the Twelfth Centuries. If one is to subscribe to that theory one must, to be consistent, extend the period by several hundred years. But the decline in drama was not due to any such superficial influence as a relatively new and, numerically computed, relatively unimportant group of religious enthusiasts. Throughout the foundering of the Roman Empire, influences of a far wider and deeper import were at work; indeed, the growth of the Christian religion was little more than a reaction, an antidote, a counter-irritant to decadence. And to that decadence from within and to the barbarian invasions from without must be traced the almost total collapse of theatrical production. Drama is essentially the art of causing many people, gathered together, to thrill to the same emotion; that thrill, to the Roman populace, had degenerated into lascivious orgies or into the bloody games of the arena. Likewise, if many people are simultaneously to be moved, great gathering places must be provided and maintained. The need of building outlying fortresses and of strengthening crumbling walls against the onslaughts of the invaders had seriously and actually taken physical

toll of the theatres themselves, even though some of their stones had found their ultimate resting places in the walls of the vast monasteries and of the stately and slow growing cathedrals.

It is often said that the drama, and especially comedy, is the true expression and mirror of its contemporaneous society. The statement is almost axiomatic. And since it is, the following picture of European society during the years comprising the centuries which were the background against which Hrotsvitha wrote her plays makes her work an even more remarkable candle in a very naughty world.

> "A thousand years had counted their hours since His birth. That thousand years had witnessed the fall of the last brick of Alexander the Great's edifice, the crumbling of the Egyptians' power, and the rise and fall of the Roman Empire . . .
>
> "From distant points of the compass strange peoples had come, astride horses and camels and on foot, hosts and hordes to invade the plains and the valleys of Europe . . . and all of them, blond or dark, were restless, fierce, inarticulate creatures, that seemed just to have risen on their hind legs . . .
>
> "Some of these hordes had definite names by which they called themselves when they appeared—Gauls, Goths, Visigoths, Huns; but there were others known only by such names as their enemies . . . had given them.
>
> "What is now known as Europe did not yet exist, and was only a huge battle-field, nay, a slaughter field of crawling, vermin-ridden, raw-meat-eating savages . . .
>
> "Rome had established some order within her walls, but Rome had also created disorder wherever she had reached out . . . Her doctrine was *vae victis*. So little was done and so little was produced that three hundred years before the Millennium the wealth of the world, passing as loot from the bag of one victor to the bag of another, had dwindled to nothingness.
>
> "France existed only in the dreams of those whose scepter inspired them with the poetry of unity and power. The country was tenanted by a hundred coarse and grimy barons who changed allegiances more frequently than their clothes, who signed peaces with their enemies and fought with their friends, who counted their vassals together with their heads of cattle, and were ruling from behind their

moats and walls and castles, and from behind mailed coats. Their power never reached farther than the points of their long spears.

"The England before the conquest by the Normans was no different from the England after, and was not Christian even in name. It had adopted whatever was expedient or convenient to its precarious existence without accepting anything outright.

"Neither Germany nor German states had even a veneer of humanity when Charlemagne thought he had realized his proud dreams because his hired and paid mummers told him so.

"Spain was still two thirds in the hands of the Moors, who were disputing power with the wild Berbers from Africa; the Moors, who had inched themselves into heavy-footed, slow-witted Europe, displaying their superiority and inflicting themselves and their ways upon harassed and scattered hordes that had degenerated into floating, headless robber bands.

"Alone, in the East, the Byzantine Empire had risen over the chaos. Alone and really only in the Byzantine Empire had Christianity risen from the dust of the arena to the golden carpets of the throne. But the Byzantine Empire was the basin in which the vices of the world had washed their feet . . .

"Two hundred years after that illiterate camel-driver of the East had proclaimed the new faith, clumsily thrown together from several other ones, using his own wisdom to dovetail the ill-fitting joints, Islamism had conquered half the world . . . Islamism threatened to wipe out both Christianity and paganism; that it had not succeeded was due to a miracle; perhaps the first real Christian miracle.

"During the three centuries before the Millennium, the specter of hunger stalked alongside the specter of pestilence. The fields lay idle and ravaged. The plowmen were both too weak and too despondent to labor. The oxen were slaughtered for meat instead of being yoked to produce grain. Corpses in every stage of putrifaction littered the roads and streets of abandoned burgs and ruined villages.

"The air was foul.

"The water was foul.

"The earth was foul.

"Babies suckled the dry breasts of their dead mothers. Every inhuman sacrilege and perversion reared its head during that period . . .

"Having tried to propitiate God unsuccessfully, people now tried to propitiate the devil.

"Only the dogs and the wolves grew fat.

"Armies emerging from behind the walls of castles, armies, headed by warriors responding to mighty and high sounding names, on the road to avenge a real or imaginary wrong, marched on their way . . .

"And the dogs and the wolves grew fat and multiplied. Vultures and crows were as thick as black hail."

If, to this ghastly picture, against which Hogarth's *Gin Alley* and *Beer Lane* become Kate Greenaway fantasies, any further comment is needed, one must remember that Hrotsvitha lived through, though she may not personally have seen it from behind the high walls of Gandersheim, the last day of the year A. D. 999. And that last day of the year A. D. 999 saw the bursting of what was undoubtedly the greatest emotional bubble which this world of men has ever witnessed. Imagine, if you can, an entire populace inspired, delirious, utterly crazed with the fear of imminent Eternal Damnation and overcome with the resultant religious frenzy of repentance up to the last stroke of the last hour of the Millenium, suddenly freed from its terror, its remorse, its religious inhibitions against natural impulses. The reaction was unparalleled—and wholly human.

Such were, in actual fact, the Dark Ages, even though there have arisen among us certain men of great erudition and even greater emotional idealism who, by many means, would convince us that the World's only hope of salvation from its present chaos lies in a return to the Spiritual inspiration of Mediaevalism. Strychnine may be an antidote to cyanide. *Vae expertis.*

And yet, as in all deserts some oasis exists, so in the utter darkness of Ninth Century Europe the walls of the Abbey of Gandersheim in Saxony rose out of the somber ocean of illiteracy as a haven for those few mariners who still tried to steer the ship of Arts and Letters to a safe berth.

The exact date of the founding of Gandersheim is uncertain, but in 852 the abbey was refounded by Ludolfe, duc of Saxony, and in 881 it appears to have been finished. Its doors were open only to girls of German blood, and almost all of its Abbesses were of the Imperial family. Any institution which in those dark

years fostered, even to the slightest degree, the flame of culture seems, in retrospect, a miracle. If so, we must regard the Saxon Abbey as *the* miracle of its age; for it was outstandingly the refuge, in northern Europe, of piety, of art, letters, poetry, and, in general, of civilization. Gandersheim in the Tenth Century Europe was the equivalent of the Royal House of Saint Cyr in France of the Seventeenth Century; nor would it be an unpardonable exaggeration to call it the cradle in which was fostered the art of Lope da Vega and Calderon, of Shakespeare, of Corneille and of Molière.

This was the setting in which Hrotsvitha, first as a nun, subsequently as an Abbess, wrote. History has handed down but scant biographical knowledge of this woman of whom a distinguished French commentator has said: "She was a Christian Sappho. In the darkness of the Middle Ages, she was an outstandingly bright and shining star, not only of Saxony, but of Europe." Such facts as have been preserved derive almost entirely from what Hrosvitha wrote of herself; and this fragmentary knowledge is contained in a manuscript, now in Munich, which seems to date from the end of the Tenth or beginning of the Eleventh Century, and which was first reprinted in Nurenberg in 1501 by Conrad Celtes, who was poet laureate of Maximilian.

From the manuscript it seems apparent that Hrotsvitha was born of noble parentage between 930 and 935, entered Gandersheim at an early age, and in due course became Abbess, in which capacity she remained until her death, probably in 1005. In certain of her prefatory remarks she pleads her youth by way of excuse for her shortcomings, and one must deduce therefrom that much of her work was done when she was not much more than thirty. From the small sum-total which the Munich Manuscript contains, one of two conclusions is inevitable: either she wrote much which has not been preserved, or she worked very slowly and painstakingly and, perhaps, deliberately destroyed more than she retained. Only eight legends in verse, six short plays and one long poetic fragment, all, of course, in Latin, are known. Of this small collection, the plays, both because of what they in themselves are, and because of what they stand for in the history of the drama, entirely overshadow Hrotsvitha's other work. "These six plays are a last gasp of the classic drama; they contain a strong but perhaps innocent note of Terence who was inherently both a classic and a modern. Hence, they may be said to be the descendants of the classic drama and

at the same time the forebears of the modern theatre of Europe."

And how enormous is that spread from the "Classic" theatre to the "Modern" in which these plays stand out as does a single mountain in the midst of a huge and arid plain! Terence, admittedly one of the last of the classics, died more than a century before the Christian era; in other words, he died more than *eleven hundred years* before Hrotsvitha. And if one admits that "modern" drama does not date from before 1500, the play-writing nun was writing plays at a period which was, by a hundred years, more removed from the beginnings of our modern theatre than Shaw and O'Neil are from Marlowe.

It is needless to say that if one compares one of these Tenth Century dramas with the best of the Twentieth Century, the difference is vast—so vast that one is inclined not to consider the former a drama. On the other hand, when compared with the Miracles and the Mysteries produced from three to five hundred years later, the contrast is almost as strongly in favor of Hrotsvitha. Certainly, the three-decker stages (in which the top layer was Heaven, the middle Earth, and the lowest Hell) with their crude mixture of liturgy and horse-play were, dramatically, far inferior to *Abraham* or to *Gallicanus*; the latter may be very elementary, the former are inchoate. Except for purposes of study or research, the liturgical dramas of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries are today unreadable; all six of Hrotsvitha's plays, although very simple, can be read with much the same sort of satisfaction as comes to one from the paintings of the Primitives. To compare them with contemporary stage-craft or with the dramatic productions of the last hundred years is, of course, unfair. They may only be appraised at their true worth if looked upon with the impartiality and love of the true antiquarian. Would it be just to match a Sargent portrait against a Cimabué or a Lucas van der Leyden? The plot may be thin, the action weak, the dialogue lifeless, but plot, action and dialogue all exist, and they exist not only to a degree which is surprising for their date, but a degree which makes it obvious that these plays were meant to be acted, not read. One feels beyond a doubt that their author was not seeking religious praise, nor did she confine herself within the scriptural or liturgical limits from which all semblance of life, originality or art had long been squeezed—but which, in her day, were the basis of all literary production. One subject concerned her above all others: chastity; and whether in the form of protecting the virtue of virgins or of

reclaiming women who had fallen from grace, all her plots are founded on that theme. This in itself is rather surprising when one remembers that these plays were written by a nun, played by nuns in an Abbey Church or in the Great Hall of a convent to an audience of grave prelates, among whom may well have sat the Diocesan Bishop, while noble ladies of the ducal house of Saxony and even members of the Imperial family may have been present.

As a framework upon which to weave and to set out her basic theme, Hrotsvitha uses legends of the Fourth, Fifth, and Sixth Centuries which, although she may modify them, she never distorted. Throughout her work one constantly feels that the author was not merely imbued with the scriptures and with the writings of the Church Fathers, but was also quite familiar with the work of such lay writers as Plautus, Terence, Horace, Virgil and perhaps the great dramatists of Greece. Had she not been, it would have been difficult for her to have expressed sentiments and created situations, not only unclerical, but human to the point of belonging to all times and to all places.

Few subjects are more conducive to argument, and more difficult or dangerous of discussion, than the attempt to define the influence which a person or a work has had on subsequent generations of Art or Letters. In the case of Hrotsvitha it is practically impossible. "Influence," generally speaking, except in rare cases when it accomplishes a resurrection, is an immediate or a continuing force. How, then, could Hrotsvitha have exercised any great "influence" on European drama, which did not come even to be born for more centuries after her death than we live after Shakespeare? Furthermore, "influence" must depend somewhat on a familiarity with that which influences. That Hrotsvitha's work, hidden away as it was in a Saxon convent, was ever well known, seems most unlikely, and even today, in an age of scientific research into the remote places and times of the past, it is safe to assert that, except to a few scholars and students of Mediaevalism, her name is wholly unknown. Perhaps, in years gone by, her work may have been more popular, since Erasmus in his *Colloquies* and Decker in his play, *The Honest Whore*, follows and, in fact, almost directly uses the substance of the drama, *Abraham*. Whether or not this constitutes "influence," each may judge for himself, but if, as has been said above, drama is the expression of its contemporary society, a comparison of these works of Hrotsvitha, of Erasmus and of Decker

provides an intensely interesting commentary on the Tenth, Fifteenth and Seventeenth Centuries—a commentary which unquestionably favors the Tenth!

Yet quite apart from the "influence" which Hrotsvitha may or may not have exercised, she and her work stand out pre-eminent, if not unique, in a span of ten centuries. Who, in the world of letters, occupies such a position? To have been the first or the last great writer; or to have stood at the beginning or at the end of a thousand-year-long period of productivity or of sterility is truly remarkable; but to have stood midway between five previous and five subsequent centuries of literary drought is a distinction without parallel. Is it then too much to maintain that Hrotsvitha occupies an eminent, although now almost ignored place in the literature of the Middle Ages?

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

Rather than state the facts in foot-notes, which invariably must distract the attention of the reader, it seems appropriate to mention a few points which may clarify certain aspects of the two plays, translations of which follow.

It is generally recognized that all purely Christian stage-productions originated, perhaps indirectly from pagan drama, but directly from the Catholic Mass. Of Mysteries and Miracles it is not necessary here to speak, since they were all, by several Centuries, subsequent to Hrotsvitha. The texts of Hrotsvitha's plays, written in the late-Latin of the Tenth Century, are unbroken units. They contain no stage-directions, no subdivisions into scenes or into acts, and give no intimations as to scenery. They were written to be produced by the author-nun, and by her convent associates; and such changes of scene as were necessary were made obvious to the audience by the actors themselves, or if not, may have been indicated by a shifting of tapestries in the Great Hall, or by similar devices. In the translations changes of location and lapses of time have been indicated for the convenience of readers.

To some it may seem that the dialogue, especially in the case of the responding characters, is almost painfully brief. An examination of the original text will show that such was the style employed by the author, and that the translator, far from abbreviating, has, if anything, succumbed to the very real temptation of "writing up" monosyllabic speeches into English sentences. Not to have yielded within limits to this temptation to expand would, in English, have given the impression that the function of some of the characters was, not to take a dramatic part, but, by their replies, merely to break up the continuity of long monologues, and this, in the translator's opinion, was not the author's intention.

ABRAHAM

By Hrotsvitha

Translated by John Heard

The Characters

Abraham, Ephrem } *Hermits*
Mary, *Abraham's niece*
A Friend of Abraham's
An Inn-Keeper

Scene I.

Abraham. Ephrem, brother of mine and sharer of my solitude, is this a good time to hold converse with you, or shall I wait until you have finished giving praise unto the Lord?

Ephrem. All converse which it is meet that we should hold one with the other should be entirely devoted to Him Who has promised to be present among those who are gathered together in His name.

Abraham. The purpose of my conversation will be, I know, pleasing in the sight of the Lord.

Ephrem. If such be the case, I will in no wise postpone our converse, and I yield wholly to your desires.

Abraham. I have been pondering a certain matter in my mind, and it is my hope that I may find you in agreement with my wishes.

Ephrem. Since we have but one heart and one soul in common, how could our wishes fail to agree?

Abraham. I have a young niece who has neither father nor mother to whom she may turn for guidance. The pity I feel for her loneliness has grown into a warm affection and her welfare is to me a constant source of concern.

Ephrem. What can earthly woes matter to you, you who have risen above this world?

Abraham. My mind is distraught lest the radiant beauty of my niece, in days to come, become tarnished by the stain of sin.

Ephram. Truly a praiseworthy source of uneasiness and one against which no blame can lie.

ABRAHAM. So do I believe and trust.

EPHRAM. How old is your niece?

ABRAHAM. When a twelvemonth shall have rolled around she will have lived for two Olympiads.

EPHREM. Your ward is yet far from having attained to years of maturity.

ABRAHAM. Even so, my heart is distressed for her sake.

EPHREM. Where dwelleth she?

ABRAHAM. Hard by my hermitage; for, in accordance with her parents' wishes, I have taken her to live with me. Furthermore, I propose to distribute her wordly riches to the poor.

EPHREM. A disregard for the riches of this world is most convenient to one whose thoughts are on Heaven.

ABRAHAM. It is my fondest wish that my niece may become the bride of Christ and that she may live according to His rule.

EPHREM. Such a desire is worthy of all praise.

ABRAHAM. Her name compels her toward that goal.

EPHREM. What name bears she?

ABRAHAM. Mary.

EPHREM. Peradventure of any doubt, the crown of virginity rests well upon the brow of one who bears that name.

ABRAHAM. Methinks, if we entreat her gently, we shall find her amenable to our desires.

EPHREM. Come, let us to her; let us endeavor to expound to her all the sweetness with which chastity fills the soul.

SCENE II.

ABRAHAM. O Mary, daughter of my adoption, oh, integral part of my soul, follow, I beseech thee, my fatherly admonitions and the wise counsels of my friend, Ephrem. Seek by thy continued chastity to imitate the patron saint of virgins whose name thou already bearest.

EPHREM. My daughter, it is not seemly that thou, who because of the mystery of thy name art raised to the pinnacle of the world, there to sit beside Mary, Mother of God, among the stars which shall never fall from the heavens, it is not fitting, say I, that thou shouldest fall from grace and crawl about among the degraded beasts of the world.

MARY. I know not the mystery which is contained in my name. Hence it is that I can not grasp the meaning of the words you speak.

EPHREM. Mary means Stella Maris, Star of the Sea,

around about which the world revolves and from which the nations draw their names.

MARY. But why, Star of the Sea?

EPHREM. Because never does it set and it is a beacon-light to mariners to show them their true course.

MARY. How then may it be that I, weak and unworthy creature that I am, made of the veriest mud, should attain unto the glory contained in the mystery of my name?

EPHREM. And yet to it thou mayest attain by keeping thy body in a state of virginal purity and thy spirit full of divine godliness.

MARY. Indeed, it is a thing beautiful beyond compare that a mortal being should become the equal of the Heavenly bodies.

EPHREM. Verily, my child; if thou preservest thy pure virginity, thou shalt become like unto the Angels of God. And in their company, when thou shalt have cast from thee thy vile earthly body, thou shalt, flying through the air and surmounting the clouds, pass along the entire cycle of the Zodiac and finally come to rest in the arms of the Son of the Virgin seated upon His Mother's couch.

MARY. Any who would not taste of such bliss is but as one of the beasts of the field. Henceforth I shall eschew the goods of this world and shall ever deny myself, that some day I may be worthy to be admitted to the joys of Heaven.

EPHREM. Truly, I perceive within the heart of this child the mature wisdom of a person full of years.

ABRAHAM. It is due to the divine grace.

EPHREM. That, none may gainsay.

ABRAHAM. Even though she dwells in the Light of Heaven it is, nevertheless, unwise that, in this age of weakness, she should be left to the guidance of her own will.

EPHREM. True.

ABRAHAM. Hard by my hermitage I will cause to be built for her a cell of which the entrance shall be narrow and through the window of which I shall teach her, by frequent visitings, the psalms and other portions of the Law of God.

EPHREM. That is a praiseworthy purpose.

MARY. Ephrem, and thou, my Father, I will submit myself to your guidance.

EPHREM. May thy Heavenly Bridegroom, to whose love thou hast, in the tenderness of thine age, devoted thyself, protect thee, my daughter, from the wiles of the devil.

Scene III.

Some years have elapsed

Abraham. Brother Ephrem, when Fate brings me either joy or sorrow it is to you before any other to whom I come. You are the only person whom I consult. Hence turn not a deaf ear to the complaints I am about to utter, but solace me in my grief.

Ephrem. O Abraham, Abraham, what is your sorrow, and why this overwhelming sadness? Must, then, a hermit be afflicted by the same woes that come upon the dwellers in the world of men?

Abraham. A great catastrophe has fallen upon me and my sorrow is beyond enduring.

Ephrem. Weary me not with details; tell me rather what afflicts you.

Abraham. Mary, my adopted daughter, whom for twice ten years I have nourished with the food both of the body and of the soul, with all diligence and zeal . . .

Ephrem. What has happened to her?

Abraham. Alas, she is lost.

Ephrem. How?

Abraham. In a manner most deplorable. After she had fallen from grace, she fled away secretly.

Ephrem. By what lures did the Serpent of All Time tempt her?

Abraham. He made use of the iniquitous passion of an imposter, who, garbed as a monk, paid her frequent and hypocritical visits, and who finally induced the defenseless heart of this innocent young maiden to share his love. In her eagerness to commit this sin she made her escape through the window.

Ephrem. Your words make me shudder.

Abraham. But when the poor girl realized that she was lost, she beat her breast, scratched her face, rent her garments, tore her hair and cried aloud in anguish.

Ephrem. And very properly. Such ruin must be mourned in rivers of tears.

Abraham. She wept aloud that no longer was she what she had been.

Ephrem. That was but meet.

Abraham. Copiously she wept to think that she had forfeited the rewards of her fasts and vigils and prayers.

EPHREM. Should she continue in such a spirit of repentance she might yet be saved.

ABRAHAM. Alas, she continued not therein, but to an original sin has added many more.

EPHREM. Your words wound me to the quick; weakness comes upon me.

ABRAHAM. After the bitterness of her tears, the sharpness of her grief was too much for her strength and she cast herself into the slough of despond.

EPHREM. Alas, for such a downfall!

ABRAHAM. Despairing of ever becoming worthy of forgiveness, she went back to the world and determined to become the instrument of its vanities.

EPHREM. Never until this hour did the Evil Spirit so triumph over any who had retired from the world to lead the saintly life of a hermit.

ABRAHAM. Always are we within the power of the devil.

EPHREM. It surprises me she should have been able to escape from your watchful care.

ABRAHAM. My spirit, indeed, was troubled, and had I not been smitten with blindness, an appalling vision which I beheld would have warned me of the ruin which was even then overhanging Mary.

EPHREM. Fain would I hear of that vision.

ABRAHAM. Methought that as I was before the door of my cell, a huge dragon, from whose jaws there issued the most loathsome stench, leapt upon a young white dove which was beside me, rent and devoured it and then vanished away.

EPHREM. The import of this vision was clear and not to be misunderstood.

ABRAHAM. When I awoke, I pondered upon what I had seen and I was fearful that Holy Church was threatened by a persecution which would lead some of the faithful into error.

EPHREM. Such, indeed, the vision would seem to portend.

ABRAHAM. Then, on my knees, I prayed unto Him Who knows what is to be, begging Him to unfold to me the prophecy of my dream.

EPHREM. You did well.

ABRAHAM. Anon, during the third night after, when my tired limbs were sunk in sleep, methought how I beheld the same dragon rolled dead at my feet and how also the dove, having taken not the smallest hurt was once more before mine eyes.

EPHREM. Your dream causes me great joy, for of a certainty I believe that some day your beloved Mary will be restored to you.

ABRAHAM. When I awoke and pondered that dream I was comforted of the grief of the former dream. I bethought me of my ward and I remembered, too, but without sadness, that for two days I had not heard her, as was her wont, sing praises unto the Lord.

EPHREM. Alas, your memory was over tardy.

ABRAHAM. Ay, verily. I drew near, and with my hand I knocked upon Mary's window, and several times I called out to her, terming her my daughter.

EPHREM. You called in vain?

ABRAHAM. In the beginning that thought came not to me, and I asked of her why she had been so remiss in performing her pious duties; yet not the smallest answer came back to mine ears.

EPHREM. And then what did you do?

ABRAHAM. As soon as I became aware that she whom I sought was no longer there, my heart turned to water and a great trembling came upon my entire body.

EPHREM. And that surprises me no whit, since I, too, merely from listening to you, am overcome in a like manner.

ABRAHAM. I filled the air with my lamentations, and I sought to know what wolf had bereft me of my ewe lamb, what robber held my beloved daughter in captivity.

EPHREM. You were justified in mourning the loss of her whom you had cherished.

ABRAHAM. In time men came who knew the truth and they told me, even as I have told you. They informed me that she had become a ministress to the vile passions of the world of men.

EPHREM. Where dwelleth she?

ABRAHAM. I know not.

EPHREM. What do you propose to do?

ABRAHAM. I have a friend who journeys through the cities and throughout the country. He will not cease his travels before he shall have learned in what spot Mary dwelleth.

EPHREM. And if he discover where she is, what then?

ABRAHAM. I shall change my raiment and, dressed like a lover, I shall seek her out. I shall by exhortations strive to bring her, after this sad shipwreck, back into the haven where formerly she was at peace.

EPHREM. Well said. But what shall you do if men proffer you meat to eat and goblets of wine to drain?

ABRAHAM. I shall not refuse them lest I be discovered.

EPHREM. It would be both wise and praiseworthy to relax for a brief period the strict discipline of your rule, if by so doing you can reclaim a lost soul for Jesus Christ.

ABRAHAM. Since your judgment affirms mine own I am confirmed in my desire to undertake this course.

EPHREM. He Who knows the innermost recesses of the heart, knows the motive which impels each of our actions. His just judgment deems not as a backslider the man who, temporarily relaxing the hard rules of discipline and associating with sinners, does so that he may the more surely bring back a soul into the paths of salvation.

ABRAHAM. You must vouchsafe me the aid of your prayers, lest the malice of the devil set my plans at naught.

EPHREM. May He Who is all goodness and without Whom no worthy end may be achieved, grant a successful termination to your plans.

SCENE IV.

After a further lapse of two years

ABRAHAM. Do I not behold that friend whom, more than two years agone I sent forth in search of Mary? Verily, it is he.

THE FRIEND. Hail, O venerable father.

ABRAHAM. Hail, friend, who has helped me so loyally. Long have I awaited your coming, and almost did I despair of your return.

THE FRIEND. I delayed my return that I might not protract your uncertainty with vague reports. As soon as I ascertained the truth I made haste to come back to you.

ABRAHAM. Have you seen Mary?

THE FRIEND. I have.

ABRAHAM. Where?

THE FRIEND. Alas, the mere telling thereof rends my heart-strings.

ABRAHAM. Tell me, I beseech you.

THE FRIEND. She has chosen to lodge in the house of a man who is engaged in a most shameful trade. Full kindly doth he deal with her and he evinces for her a deep affection; and, for-

sooth, he does so with good reason, since daily he receives large sums from those who are Mary's lovers.

ABRAHAM. Mary's lovers!

THE FRIEND. Verily, and alas.

ABRAHAM. Who are these lovers?

THE FRIEND. They are many.

ABRAHAM. Alas, Sweet Jesus! Do I hear that she, whom I had reared to become Thy spouse, gives herself to strange lovers?

THE FRIEND. Always has it been that harlots delighted in the love of strangers.

ABRAHAM. Supply me a swift horse and the garments of a soldier. I will put from me the garb of the Church, and I will go to her dressed as a lover.

THE FRIEND. Of all these matters will I have care.

ABRAHAM. Bring me as well, I pray, a wide hat wherewith to conceal my tonsure.

THE FRIEND. 'Twere a most necessary precaution, lest you be recognized.

ABRAHAM. What think you? Should I take with me a piece of gold wherewith I may pay the inn-keeper?

THE FRIEND. Assuredly; since otherwise hardly would you come to have speech with Mary.

SCENE V.

Abraham has reached his destination

ABRAHAM. Hail, good inn-keeper.

INN-KEEPER. Who calls? Hail, stranger.

ABRAHAM. Have you lodging for a traveller who fain would lodge with you this night?

INN-KEEPER. Ay, since in our humble hostelry we may refuse no guest.

ABRAHAM. Thus should it be.

INN-KEEPER. Enter; supper shall be prepared for you forthwith.

ABRAHAM. Mine humble thanks for so hospitable a welcome. I have yet to ask of you an even greater boon.

INN-KEEPER. Speak forth your wish and peradventure of a doubt the same shall be vouchsafed you.

ABRAHAM. Take then this trifling gift I offer, but so contrive that a certain passing fair damsel who, I know, lodges with you, shall sit with me at meat.

INN-KEEPER. Why do you wish to see her?

ABRAHAM. Because I have a great desire to look upon a woman whose beauty I have often heard extolled.

INN-KEEPER. Those who extol her charms lie not, for the beauty of her countenance surpasses that of all other women.

ABRAHAM. Hence it is that I love her to madness.

INN-KEEPER. Greatly does it surprise me that old and decrepit as you are, you should entertain love for a young woman.

ABRAHAM. And yet certain it is that I have come hither only that mine eyes might rest upon her.

(*Enter* MARY.)

INN-KEEPER. Come hither, Mary, and let this stranger feast his eyes upon thy beauty.

MARY. Here am I.

ABRAHAM (*to himself*). With what fortitude and with what strength of mind must I not arm myself when I behold her whom I cherished in the solitude of my hermitage, now bedecked with all the trappings of a harlot? The time is not yet, however, for my face to betray the feelings of my heart. With stern courage will I restrain my welling tears, and behind a mask of feigned gaiety will I hide the bitterness of my grief.

INN-KEEPER. O Mary, most fortunate are you, since not only can you draw constantly around you young men of your own age, but even the old men crowd about you eager to make proof of their love!

MARY. All who proffer me love do I requite with love in equal measure.

ABRAHAM. I pray you, Mary, give me a kiss.

MARY. Not only will I give you sweetest kisses, but I will caress and embrace your neck which the passing years have bowed.

ABRAHAM. If so, great joy shall be mine.

MARY (*to herself*). What is the odor which I perceive? What extraordinary perfume assails my senses? Verily, it recalls to me the sweet fragrance of the days of my purity.

ABRAHAM (*to himself*). Now is the moment to dissemble; and I must abandon myself to careless mirth as would a thoughtless young man, lest the seriousness of my demeanor cause me to be discovered, the which might force Mary, in very shame, to retire to her chamber.

MARY (*half to herself, half aloud*). Alas, miserable sinner that I am, to what depths am I fallen!

ABRAHAM. This hall where crowds foregather seems hardly a fitting place in which to utter words of sadness.

INN-KEEPER. Why, O Mistress Mary, dost thou sigh, and why dost thou shed tears? For two years now thou hast lodged here and never have I heard thee complain, nor has any cloud of sadness overshadowed thy speech.

MARY. Would to God that Death three years agone had taken me unto him. Then should I not have fallen into so sinful a way of life.

ABRAHAM. I came not hither to join with thee in lamentations for thy sins, but to enjoy thy love.

MARY. A passing sorrow came upon me and caused me so to lament. However, let us to supper and to the enjoyment of all felicity, for, verily, as thou remindest me, this is neither the time nor the place for the repentance of my sins. (*They seat themselves at table.*)

ABRAHAM. Copiously have we eaten and copiously drunk; thanks be to your liberality, good inn-keeper. Let me now, I pray you, rise from the supper table that I may stretch my weary limbs upon a couch and refresh myself in kindly sleep.

INN-KEEPER. According to your wishes, so let it be.

MARY. Arise, sweet friend; arise and I will with thee into the chamber.

SCENE VI.

In a chamber

MARY. Here in this chamber we may take our ease; behold the bed is soft, not a board pallet thinly overlaid. Be seated, pray, that I may remove the sandals from your weary feet.

ABRAHAM. Many thanks; yet first make fast the bolts with care, that none may enter in upon us.

MARY. Be not concerned; I shall make such disposition that no one shall intrude.

ABRAHAM (*to himself*). Now is the time to remove my wide-brimmed hat and thus to discover myself to her. (*Aloud*) O daughter of my adoption; O portion of my heart! O Mary, dost thou recognize in me the old man who nourished thee with the loving tenderness of a father, and who affianced thee as bride to the Only Son of the King of Heaven?

MARY. O God! It is Abraham, my father and my master!

ABRAHAM. What befell thee, O my daughter?

MARY. An affliction, very great.

ABRAHAM. Who deceived thee? Who seduced thee?

MARY. He who devised the downfall of our forefathers.

ABRAHAM. What of the saintly life thou ledest?

MARY. 'Tis lost beyond retrieve.

ABRAHAM. And where thy virginal modesty and where thy perfect chastity?

MARY. Alas!

ABRAHAM. If thou returnest not into the paths of grace, how shall thy fastings, thy vigils and thy prayers avail thee? How shall they benefit thee since thou art fallen from the heights of Heaven into the nethermost pit of Hell?

MARY. Alas, my Father!

ABRAHAM. Why didst thou despise me? Why didst thou abandon me? Why didst thou not make known to me thy fall from grace? With the aid of my beloved Ephrem, full penance would I have done for thee.

MARY. Having fallen into sin, and defiled as I then was, I dared not draw nigh unto thy saintliness.

ABRAHAM. Who, save the Son of the Virgin, ever escaped from sin?

MARY. None, verily.

ABRAHAM. To sin is the lot of man, but to persevere in the way of sin is the devil's own. Blame should attach not to him who falleth in a moment of sudden weakness, but only to him who refuseth to rise again from his sin as quickly as he may.

MARY. Miserable sinner that I am. (*She falls at his feet.*)

ABRAHAM. Be not downhearted, and do not remain prostrate on the ground. Rise, rather, and listen to what I am about to tell thee.

MARY. Fear caused me to cast myself upon the ground; the weight of thy fatherly remonstrances was too heavy for me to bear.

ABRAHAM. Think rather upon my love for thee, my daughter, and fear not.

MARY. Would that I might!

ABRAHAM. Is it not for thy sake that I have foregone the delectable solitude of my desert abode and have failed in the observance of the regular discipline of my rule? Is it not for thy sake that I, a hermit in very truth, have sat at table with lewd

persons? Have not I, who now a long time have taken a vow of silence, uttered words of vanity lest I be discovered? Cast not thine eyes upon the ground. Why dost thou refuse to answer me or to impart to me the innermost secrets of thy thoughts?

MARY. The knowledge that I have sinned weighs too heavily upon me, and I dare not lift mine eyes to Heaven, nor mingle my speech with thine.

ABRAHAM. Fear not, my daughter, nor despair. But raise thyself rather from the depths of remorse and put thy trust in God.

MARY. The very greatness of my sin hath plunged me into grief unspeakable.

ABRAHAM. Verily and beyond doubt, thy sin is great, but the Divine Mercy transcendeth all things. Hence cast away thy sadness and make the best advantage of the brief time thou still hast in the world to repent, for the greater be the abomination and the sin, the greater is the mercy of God.

MARY. Were a sinner but assured of ultimate forgiveness, hardly would he fail to give himself up wholeheartedly to repentance.

ABRAHAM. Have pity on me, O my daughter. Bethink thee of the fatigues which I have borne on thy behalf. Put an end to thy utter despair which, in very fact, is the greatest of all sins, since he who doubts God's mercy for all sinners is guilty beyond pardon. For, just as a spark struck from a flint can in no wise set the whole ocean aflame, neither can the wickedness of our sins decrease by one iota the sweetness of Divine forgiveness.

MARY. Far be it from me to set too light a store on the goodness of the Almighty; yet when I consider the exceeding gravity of my sin, fearful am I lest there be no penitence great enough to atone therefor.

ABRAHAM. Upon mine own shoulders will I take thy sin, if only thou wilt return to thy former abode and wilt there resume the form of life which thou hast abandoned.

MARY. Never will I gainsay thy wishes, and humbly do I obey thy commands.

ABRAHAM. Now do I perceive that I have won back my daughter whom I nourished, and henceforward shall I cherish her above all in this world.

MARY. A little gold I have, and some fine raiment. What disposition shall I make thereof?

ABRAHAM. What came to thee in sin, with thy sin shalt thou leave it.

MARY. I had purposed to bestow these things upon the poor or to offer them upon the altar.

ABRAHAM. The price of sin is not acceptable in God's sight.

MARY. If such be the case, no more will I think upon the matter.

ABRAHAM. Behold, it is dawn; it is day; let us hence.

MARY. Lead on, dear Father; as doth the good shepherd who bringeth the lost sheep back into the fold. Go thou before, and I will follow in thy footsteps.

ABRAHAM. Nay, I will go on foot and thou shalt ride on my horse, lest the sharp stones along the way wound thy tender feet.

MARY. How, properly, shall I pronounce thy praise, and by what gratitude shall I repay such kindness? Instead of urging me by threats to repent, thou leadest me into the Way by tenderness and by words of kindness—me, who am unworthy of even the smallest pity.

ABRAHAM. This much only do I demand of thee, that throughout thy life thou remain a faithful follower of the Christ.

MARY. To God will I devote my days with all my strength and with all my will, and should my strength prove too weak, always shall my will remain steadfast.

ABRAHAM. Henceforth must thou serve God with the same zeal with which thou hast ministered unto the vanities of this world.

MARY. Unto God shall I pray, counting on thy saintliness, that I may serve His purposes.

ABRAHAM. Let us make haste to be gone.

MARY. Ay, let us hasten; I would not tarry a moment in this place.

SCENE VII.

Same as Scene III

ABRAHAM. How swiftly and how easily have we accomplished the arduous journey.

MARY. What the heart desires done, seems quickly done.

ABRAHAM. Here is thy cell from which thou fleddest away.

MARY. Alas, it was the witness of my sin. Scarce do I dare enter in.

ABRAHAM. Well said, my daughter, since one should flee from the spot wherein the enemy hath vanquished one.

MARY. Where, then, dost thou command that I should do penance?

ABRAHAM. Go rather into this cell the which is even more secluded, that the Serpent of the Ages may never again deceive thee.

MARY. Thy will be done.

ABRAHAM. I go to seek out my good friend Ephrem, that he may rejoice with me in that I have found thee; for he alone wept with me when thou wast lost.

MARY. 'Tis fitting that thou shouldest so do.

SCENE VIII.

EPHREM. Are your tidings good?

ABRAHAM. Ay, of the best.

EPHREM. You delight me, and I doubt not but that you have found Mary.

ABRAHAM. That I have, and to my great joy I have brought her back within the fold.

EPHREM. I am certain that the Grace of God assisted you toward this good end.

ABRAHAM. Peradventure of a doubt.

EPHREM. Tell me, I pray, what is her manner of life?

ABRAHAM. Wholly it is according to my direction.

EPHREM. No better guidance could she have.

ABRAHAM. No matter how hard nor how painful was the task which I imposed, without murmur has she undertaken it.

EPHREM. Such obedience is most highly to be praised.

ABRAHAM. Dressed in sack cloth and mortifying her body by vigils and by fasts, she keeps the Rule with utmost severity, and subordinates her delicate body to her Soul.

EPHREM. And so should it be, since the degradation of carnal passion can be washed clean only by the most painful mortification of the body.

ABRAHAM. Her lamentations pierce my heart, and her repentance moves me to even greater contrition.

EPHREM. How wholly do I share your feelings.

ABRAHAM. As formerly she set unto the world an example of wrong doing, so now she strives with all her strength to lead the life of a repentant sinner.

EPHREM. Such purposes shall bring great benefit to her soul.

ABRAHAM. Greatly as she was defiled by sin, she now seeks a life of purity.

EPHREM. Your words ring sweetly in mine ears, and their import brings happiness to the marrow of my bones.

ABRAHAM. How should it be otherwise, when all the hosts of the angels rejoice and give praise unto the Most High for the redemption of a sinner?

EPHREM. Ay, so must it be, since God rejoices less in beholding a good man walking in the paths of righteousness than in the repentance of one who has strayed from the true way.

ABRAHAM. So, too, should we extol the mercy which God has shown unto Mary, since we scarce could hope that she might ever have been saved.

EPHREM. Let us give thanks and let us sing praises; ay, let us sing praises to the Most Holy, the Most Merciful, the only beloved Son of God who will not allow them whom He has redeemed with His precious blood to perish.

ABRAHAM. All glory, honor, praise and blessings be on His name throughout the world, world without end. Amen.

AMEN

GALLICANUS

By Hrotsvitha

Translated by John Heard

The Characters

Constantine, *Emperor of Rome*
Gallicanus, *Roman General*
Constance, *Constantine's Daughter*
Artemia, Attica } *Gallicanus' Daughters*
John and Paul, *Primates to Constance*
Bradan, *King of the Scythians*
Helen, *Mother of Constantine*
Lords, Tribunes, Guards, Roman and Scythian Soldiers

Scene I.

Constantine. We weary, O Gallicanus, of these many delays. Thou art over slow in attacking the Scythians—a people, which, as thou knowest, is of all peoples the only one to refuse the Roman Peace and brazenly to set at naught our might. And yet thou art full well aware that, because of thy valor, it is to thee to whom we have entrusted the leadership of the army which is to defend the Empire.

Gallicanus. O Emperor, O Augustus, wholeheartedly am I the servant of thy person and constantly do I strive that my deeds should in all ways conform to thy Majesty's wishes. Never yet have I shunned my duty.

Constantine. That fact need not be called to mind; and well aware are we of thy many services. Hence is it, furthermore, that we have relied upon entreaties rather than upon reproaches to urge thee to perform our will.

Gallicanus. With all dispatch I now undertake the task.

Constantine. We are well pleased.

Gallicanus. No thought of mine own life shall ever deter me in the performance of mine Emperor's wish.

Constantine. Such zeal rejoices us, and we shall not be unmindful of the devotion thou showest for our person.

Gallicanus. And yet, methinks, such boundless devotion is worthy of a suitable reward.

CONSTANTINE. Justice requires it.

GALLICANUS. No matter how arduous the task, or how great the difficulties, the more cheerfully are they undertaken when one's reward is assured.

CONSTANTINE. Peradventure of a doubt.

GALLICANUS. May thy Majesty then be graciously disposed to vouchsafe me, even now, the reward for the dangers I am about to encounter, so that the toil of battle may not dampen my warlike ardor, and that the knowledge of my reward may endow me with greater might.

CONSTANTINE. Never have we refused thee, nor ever shall, that recompense which the Senate in plenary session has decreed the highest of all honors, namely the privilege of our intimacy and the governorship of our palace.

GALLICANUS. True, O Lord, yet is that not the present goal of mine ambitions.

CONSTANTINE. If thou desirest aught else, speak out.

GALLICANUS. My lord, I do.

CONSTANTINE. What wishest thou?

GALLICANUS. I scarce dare ask.

CONSTANTINE. Speak.

GALLICANUS. I fear thy Majesty might be enangered.

CONSTANTINE. Not so.

GALLICANUS. And yet I fear 'tis so.

CONSTANTINE. Nay.

GALLICANUS. Thy Majesty would be wroth.

CONSTANTINE. Fear nothing.

GALLICANUS. In that case, then will I speak, since so am I bidden to do. I love thy Majesty's daughter, Constance.

CONSTANTINE. It is fitting, indeed, and right that thou shouldst love thine Emperor's daughter with due respect and in all honor.

GALLICANUS. Thy Majesty cuts short my plea.

CONSTANTINE. 'Tis not my purpose. Speak on.

GALLICANUS. If thy Majesty will graciously grant me such a boon, I would have her to wife.

CONSTANTINE (*to the lords*). Faith, 'tis no small reward he asks: He begs a boon unheard of heretofore among you, my lords. Indeed, the greatest of all gifts.

GALLICANUS. Alas, alas, I am refused. I feared as much. (*To the lords*). I pray you, sirs, join to my prayers your own.

THE LORDS. Illustrious Emperor, his services deserve and thy dignity demands that Gallicanus' prayer be not refused.

CONSTANTINE. In so far as lies within my power, I do not refuse the boon, yet must I with scrupulous care assure myself of my daughter's consent.

THE LORDS. Well said, my lord.

CONSTANTINE. I will go in unto her, and if such be thy wish, Gallicanus, I will take counsel with her of this matter.

GALLICANUS. That is my fondest desire.

SCENE II.

In Constance's apartments

CONSTANCE (*to herself*). Our lord and Emperor seems sadder than is his wont as he draws near. And greatly do I wonder what he desires of me.

CONSTANTINE. Come hither, Constance, my daughter; there is somewhat of which I would speak with thee.

CONSTANCE. I am here, my lord; what wouldest thou of me?

CONSTANTINE. I am in great perplexity, my daughter, and my heart is heavy.

CONSTANCE. Anon, as I beheld thee drawing near, I became aware of this sadness, and without knowing the cause thereof, I was distraught and afraid.

CONSTANTINE. It is thou who art the cause of my perplexity.

CONSTANCE. I?

CONSTANTINE. Ay, thou.

CONSTANCE. Thou makest me to fear, my lord. What is this matter?

CONSTANTINE. Alas, I dread that the mere telling thereof may cause thee sorrow.

CONSTANCE. Far greater sorrow would be mine wert thou to hide the matter from me.

CONSTANTINE. Lord Gallicanus, our general in chief, whose continuous triumphs have raised him above all the dignitaries of my court, and whose services are often invaluable for the protection of the realm . . .

CONSTANCE. Ay, sir, and what of him?

CONSTANTINE. Fain would he have thee to wife.

CONSTANCE. Me?

CONSTANTINE. Ay, thee.

CONSTANCE. Rather would I die.

CONSTANTINE. I feared as much.

CONSTANCE. Scarce can it surprise thee, since well dost thou know that with thy permission and consent I have vowed my virginity unto the Lord.

CONSTANTINE. Full well I know it.

CONSTANCE. Nor can any torments cause me by one tittle to alter my solemn vow.

CONSTANTINE. That is very meet; and yet, my daughter, thereby am I thrown into a very quandary. For, if, as a father's heart directs, I allow thee to fulfill thy vow, no little harm will thereby come upon the realm. And yet, if (the which may God forfend) I should run counter to thy wishes, I should be damned throughout all time.

CONSTANCE. If I despaired of any help from God, it is I, O my Father, indeed I, more than any, who would be overwhelmed with woe unspeakable.

CONSTANTINE. Thy words are truth.

CONSTANCE. Yet sadness can have no place in a heart whose trust is in divine love.

CONSTANTINE. Well spoken, Constance, my daughter.

CONSTANCE. If thou wilt graciously heed my counsel, I will point out to thee a way which will circumvent this double danger.

CONSTANTINE. Would to God thou couldest!

CONSTANCE. Make thou semblance that thou art disposed to grant Gallicanus his wishes as soon as this war shall have been brought to a triumphant close. And, that he may be the surer that thou seest eye to eye with him, prevail upon him to leave in my company while he shall be abroad his two daughters, Attica and Artemia, that they may be hostages of that love which shall unite him and me. I, in turn, will cause my two primates, Paul and John, to accompany him.

CONSTANTINE. What if he return victorious?

CONSTANCE. In such case, before he return, we must call for help from Him who hath created all things, that He may change the heart of Gallicanus.

CONSTANTINE. O my daughter; O my daughter, the sweet wisdom of thy words hath so softened the bitterness of thy father's grief that the weight of this perplexity hath for ever been lifted from my shoulders.

CONSTANCE. Then is there no cause for grieving.

CONSTANTINE. I go to seek Gallicanus, that I may beguile him with the lure of this fair promise.

CONSTANCE. Go in peace, my father and my lord.

SCENE III.

GALLICANUS. Surpassing curiosity consumeth mine heart, my lords, to hear the result of this long conversation which the Emperor holds with his daughter, our most gracious mistress.

THE LORDS. Peradventure of a doubt, he leadeth her in the path of thy desire.

GALLICANUS. May all success crown his entreaties.

THE LORDS. Our greatest hope is that he may succeed.

GALLICANUS. Be still! Be silent all! The Emperor comes; and lo, his brow is no longer clouded with perplexity as when he went from us. He is of a cheerful countenance.

THE LORDS. Fortune favors.

GALLICANUS. If, as 'tis said, man's visage be the mirror of his soul, the serenity of his countenance bespeaketh joy and kindness in his heart.

THE LORDS. So seemeth it to us.

(*Enter* CONSTANTINE.)

CONSTANTINE. Gallicanus!

GALLICANUS. What saith the Emperor?

THE LORDS. Draw nigh, draw nigh! He calleth thee.

GALLICANUS. O ye propitious gods, aid ye my cause!

CONSTANTINE. Lord Gallicanus, fare forth to war with an untroubled heart, for on thy return thou shalt receive the boon thou hast entreated.

GALLICANUS. O mine Emperor, dost thou make sport of me?

CONSTANTINE. Nay; an why should I?

GALLICANUS. My happiness would overflow, were I but certain of one matter.

CONSTANTINE. What might that matter be?

GALLICANUS. Her answer.

CONSTANTINE. My daughter's answer?

GALLICANUS. Ay, her answer.

CONSTANTINE. It is scarce fitting that a chaste virgin should make answer to such matters. And yet, methinks, that what, in the flow of time, shall occur shall sufficiently prove to thee that she consenteth.

GALLICANUS. Had I that certitude, small store would I set upon her answer.

CONSTANTINE. Proof shall be thine.

GALLICANUS. So would I have it.

CONSTANTINE. It is her wish that her primates, John and Paul, shall remain in thy company until the marriage day.

GALLICANUS. Why might that be?

CONSTANTINE. That by holding constant converse with them, thou come the better to know more of her habits and of her way of life.

GALLICANUS. A thought most excellent, and one which rejoiceth me much.

CONSTANTINE. And she, in turn, is fain that during thine absence thy two daughters should abide with her, that of them she may learn how best to satisfy thine every wish.

GALLICANUS. My fondest desires are then fulfilled; my joy knoweth no bounds.

CONSTANTINE. Give orders, then, that thy daughters be brought hither without delay.

GALLICANUS (*to soldiers*). Have ye not yet made haste? Run, run, my soldiers, and bring my daughters straightway that they may bow down before their mistress.

SCENE IV.

In Constance's apartments.

Guards. O Lady Constance, Mistress of our lives, behold, the high-born daughters of Gallicanus are here to do thee homage. Their beauty, their wisdom and the purity of their lives fit them in all ways to dwell in thy presence.

CONSTANCE. 'Tis well. (*Enter the daughters with solemn honors.*) O Christ, guardian of virgins; O Thou Who instillest chastity within our hearts, and Who, fulfilling the prayers of Thy holy martyr, Saint Agnes, hast preserved my body from contamination and my mind from the idolatries of the unbaptised; O Thou Whose emblem is the virginal couch of Thy Mother whereon Thou wast made manifest as the Very God; O Thou, Who in the appointed hour, wast brought forth from Thy Mother's womb a Very Man, to Thee I pray; Thou Who art all wisdom; Thou Who, with the Father, art everlasting, and Who hast, with Him, created and dost forevermore rule and watch over this world of men, grant that Gallicanus who would, by making it his own, rob Thee of the love I bear Thee, may forego his sinful design and may be drawn to worship Thee. And, in

Thy mercy, may it please Thee to take his daughters unto Thee as Thy Holy Brides. Grant that, drop by drop, the infinite sweetness of Thy love may pervade their thoughts unto the end that, eschewing all carnal thoughts, they may be admitted to the company of those virgins who are consecrate to Thee.

ARTEMIA. Greetings, O Constance. Hail to thee, our illustrious mistress.

CONSTANCE. And to you, greetings, O Attica and Artemia, sisters of mine. Make not obeisance before me; rather stand ye forth and give unto me the kiss of love.

ARTEMIA. Great is our happiness, O illustrious lady, in offering thee our homage; and it is our privilege to place ourselves wholeheartedly at thy disposition, if only that we may bask in the sunlight of thy graciousness.

CONSTANCE. Only to God Almighty, Who reigneth in the Heavens, should we offer the abject servitude of a slave. Indeed, the love and the devotion which it is our duty to render Him, requires that, being made one with Him, we keep ourselves unspotted by the world, that we may be worthy to enter within the Gates of Paradise bearing the palms of pure virginity.

ARTEMIA. In naught would we gainsay thee. Rather shall we obediently subscribe to thy teachings and the more in those matters which touch upon all knowledge of the truth, and upon our firm resolution to conserve our virginity unsullied.

CONSTANCE. Your answer is most seemly and wholly within the tenor of your noble virtue. Nor do I entertain even the smallest doubt that already the inspiration from on high has shown you the true path of faith.

ARTEMIA. How could we, priestesses of idolatrous gods, be in any wise the vessels of wisdom except it was through divine enlightenment?

CONSTANCE. As I become aware of the unflinching constancy of your faith, I become the more convinced that Gallicanus will also be led into the paths of truth.

ARTEMIA. If he be but taught, surely he will believe.

CONSTANCE (*to the guards*). Let John and Paul be summoned hither.

(*Enter* JOHN *and* PAUL.)

JOHN. Thou badest us come to thee, gracious lady. We are come.

CONSTANCE. Go ye forthwith and join yourselves unto the person of Gallicanus. From your constant teachings let him

little by little become initiated into the mystery of our faith. For it may be that God may make us the instruments of winning him to Him.

PAUL. We go, strong in our hope of God's assistance, nor, for our part, shall we relax the ardor with which we shall admonish Gallicanus.

SCENE V.

With the Roman Army

GALLICANUS. Hail unto you, O John and Paul, for now this long time have I in great anxiety awaited your coming hither.

JOHN. No sooner had our mistress bade us come to thee, than we hastened to thy side with all despatch that we might offer thee our services.

GALLICANUS. The offer of your services is to me more welcome than that of any others.

PAUL. Thine are words of wisdom, for is it not said that he who welcometh our friends becometh thereby himself our friend?

GALLICANUS. Ay; so is it said.

JOHN. And we are persuaded that the love which our mistress bears unto thee will of a certainty stand surety for thy benevolence toward us.

GALLICANUS. Wisely have you spoken. Come hither, ye tribunes and ye centurions, marshal your companies. Draw nigh, all ye soldiers under my command, for John and Paul, upon whose coming I waited before setting forth, are now arrived.

THE TRIBUNES. Lead on.

GALLICANUS. And first let us repair to the Capitol; let us enter into the temple there to do worship and to propitiate the Gods with fitting sacrifices, since otherwise may we scarce hope that our arms may win the victory.

THE TRIBUNES. The rites must be fulfilled.

JOHN (*to* PAUL). We will withdraw ourselves.

PAUL. 'Tis fitting that we should.

(*Exeunt all.*)

SCENE VI.

GALLICANUS *and his following come out of the temple.*

JOHN. The General cometh forth from the temple; let us to horse that we may meet him.

PAUL. And that without delay.

GALLICANUS. Whence come ye? Where have ye been?

JOHN. We have made ready our belongings and have sent them forward that, untroubled by such matters, we might join ourselves unto thy company.

GALLICANUS. It is well done.

SCENE VII.

A battle field

GALLICANUS. By Jupiter, O my tribunes, I behold the legions of a host beyond number. And the diversity of their arms is a thing to make the heart turn to water.

THE TRIBUNES. By Hercules, it is the enemy!

GALLICANUS. Stand fast, and quit yourselves like men.

THE TRIBUNES. Yet how may we withstand a multitude such as this?

GALLICANUS. What other choice have ye?

THE TRIBUNES. To yield unto his yoke.

GALLICANUS. May Apollo protect us from such shame!

THE TRIBUNES. By Pollux! The choice is not ours! Behold, on all sides are we encompassed; we are smitten; we are slain!

GALLICANUS. Alas, what will befall if these my tribunes set at naught my commands and yield them to the enemy?

JOHN. Make thou a vow unto God that thou wilt espouse the faith of Christ, and thine shall be the victory.

GALLICANUS. That vow I make; that vow will I fulfill.

THE ENEMY. Alas, Bradan, O our King, the tide of battle which favored us has now turned against us. Lo, our arms are weakened; our strength faileth and our hearts are turned to water that we can fight no more!

BRADAN. Would I might counsel you, but a like weakness hath o'ercome me, too. Naught remains but to yield to the Captain of the Roman host.

THE ENEMY. No other course of safety remaineth unto us.

BRADAN. Sir Gallicanus, spare us; take not our lives from us, but rather look upon us and make disposition of us as thou wouldest of thy slaves.

GALLICANUS. Cast out fear and despair not! I demand only that ye give me hostages and that ye recognize yourselves as

vassals of the Emperor. Do that, and forever shall ye live in happiness within the Roman Peace.

BRADAN. If such the case, thine only task is to name the number and the rank of those who shall remain hostages in thy hands, and to specify the sum of tribute which thou proposest to exact.

GALLICANUS. Fellow soldiers, lay down your arms. Cease ye from the slaughter; set upon your foes no more. Embrace ye as friends those who but recently were our enemies.

JOHN. Prayer may work miracles where human pride doth fail.

GALLICANUS. So, indeed, it should be.

PAUL. Great is the succor of the Almighty which is afforded to them who, in a spirit of humble adoration, bow themselves down to ask it.

GALLICANUS. No surer proof could be asked than has been vouchsafed to thee.

PAUL. It is easy to make vows while the storm rageth, yet should they be made good with equal fervor when we are come within the harbor where we would be.

GALLICANUS. With thy words am I thoroughly in accord, and for that reason do I wish to be baptised with as little delay as may be, that I may, henceforth, employ my life, as much as may be vouchsafed me, in the service of God.

SCENE VIII.

The streets of Rome

GALLICANUS. As we make our entry into Rome, behold the citizens, as is their wont, hasten to lay before us the symbols of the victor's due.

JOHN. Most properly.

GALLICANUS. And yet, methinks, these emblems of victory are due neither to our personal powers nor to the benevolent protection of their Gods.

PAUL. Assuredly not; to the One and Only God are they due.

GALLICANUS. If so, 'twere meet that, in our progress we should, without stopping, pass their temples by.

JOHN. In that speakest thou well.

GALLICANUS. More fitting were it that as devout pro-

claimers of the Faith, we should do worship in the churches of the Sanctified Apostles.

PAUL. What happy words are these! So hast thou made proof that thou art a true Christian.

(*Enter* CONSTANTINE.)

CONSTANTINE. O Soldiers of the Empire, it wondereth me that Gallicanus so long delays his coming.

SOLDIERS. Scarce had he entered Rome when he made haste to visit the church of St. Peter, and there, falling upon his knees, he gave thanks unto the Almighty who had vouchsafed him the victory.

CONSTANTINE. What? Gallicanus did that?

SOLDIERS. Ay, he.

CONSTANTINE. It passeth understanding.

SOLDIERS. Behold; he comes, and thou thyself may question him.

(*Enter* GALLICANUS.)

CONSTANTINE. Long have I tarried for thy coming, O Gallicanus, that I might have tidings of the battle, and of thy prospering.

GALLICANUS. Unto thine ear will I relate them, O my Lord; nor will I overlook the least.

CONSTANTINE. Details concern me not. Tell me, I pray, what fain I most would know.

GALLICANUS. What might that be?

CONSTANTINE. How is it that when thou wentest forth thy last steps took thee to the shrines of our gods, whereas on thy return thy first care is to bow thyself before the Church of the Saint Apostles?

GALLICANUS. Askest thou that of me?

CONSTANTINE. Ay, and most eagerly.

GALLICANUS. Mine be to answer then.

CONSTANTINE. Speak on.

GALLICANUS. Augustus, Emperor of mine, I do admit, as thou dost charge it me, that when I fared forth into the wars I entered the temples of the gods and there made supplication to the spirits of evil.

CONSTANTINE. A Roman custom from the earliest days of Rome.

GALLICANUS. An ancient but an evil rite.

CONSTANTINE. Evil, yet old.

GALLICANUS. Soon came the tribunes with their legions to join mine host.

CONSTANTINE. With solemn pomp faredst thou forth from Rome.

GALLICANUS. We marched; we met the enemy; we fought; we were undone.

CONSTANTINE. The arms of Rome undone?

GALLICANUS. Ay, put to flight.

CONSTANTINE. Catastrophe unheard of and unparalleled!

GALLICANUS. I offered sacrifices to the gods, yet none came to mine aid. Indeed, the tide of battle ran against us sore, and many of our side were slain.

CONSTANTINE. Thy words astound me.

GALLICANUS. My tribunes all defied my orders and laid down their arms.

CONSTANTINE. Surrendered?

GALLICANUS. Ay.

CONSTANTINE. Ye gods! What didst thou then?

GALLICANUS. What course was open, but to flee?

CONSTANTINE. Not flight!

GALLICANUS. Alas, my lord!

CONSTANTINE. A bitter draught for pride to drain!

GALLICANUS. Most bitter.

CONSTANTINE. And how avoidedst thou this sore predicament?

GALLICANUS. My true companions, John and Paul, gave counsel that I should make vows unto the God Almighty.

CONSTANTINE. No better rede could be.

GALLICANUS. Ay, so it proved; for scarce had I made utterance of the vow, than I could feel the succor from on high.

CONSTANTINE. And how came that about?

GALLICANUS. Lo, there appeared to me a man of tender years, who on his shoulder bore a cross, and bade me follow him. And in His hand he held a sword.

CONSTANTINE. This youth, beyond all doubt, came as a messenger of Heaven.

GALLICANUS. Of that no doubt may be, for instantly I saw, beside me standing, soldiers, all to me unknown, who proffered me their aid.

CONSTANTINE. The Hosts of Heaven.

GALLICANUS. Ay, of a certainty, for, following in the footsteps of my guide, I pressed my way, (and wholly without fear)

within the close-drawn cohorts of mine enemies. And so I came upon their King, named Bradan, who o'ertaken by a sudden fright, cast himself on the ground before my feet and yielded him to me with all his host, vowing that for all time to come he would pay tribute to the Roman Realm.

CONSTANTINE. Praise be to Him Who gave the victory to our arms, and will not permit that those who follow Him should be confounded.

GALLICANUS. I could not ask for greater proof thereof.

CONSTANTINE. And what befell thy recreant tribunes?

GALLICANUS. Swift were they to ensue my pardon and my grace.

CONSTANTINE. Didst thou forgive their cowardice?

GALLICANUS. Not so, your Majesty. Should I forgive men who in the hour of need had played me false; men who deserted to the enemy when I was sorely pressed?

CONSTANTINE. What didst thou then?

GALLICANUS. I offered them their pardon, but on certain terms.

CONSTANTINE. And what were they?

GALLICANUS. I bade proclaim that all who would embrace the Faith of Christ should not be stripped of their commissions, but should win promotion, and that they who did refuse conversion must accept disgrace and death.

CONSTANTINE. So mightest thou within thy powers decree.

GALLICANUS. And as for myself who am purified by the water of baptism, so completely have I dedicated myself to the service of God that I forego all claims upon thy daughter, although I loved her beyond all things upon this earth. And this I do that, by abstaining from marriage I may become worthy of Him Who is the Son of the Virgin.

CONSTANTINE. Come hither, come hither, O Gallicanus; let me clasp thee to mine heart, for now, today, the hour has sounded when I may expound to thee what, for a time, I felt I must conceal.

GALLICANUS. What might that be?

CONSTANTINE. My daughter and thy two daughters have chosen to enter upon the sainted path which thou, too, hast determined upon.

GALLICANUS. My heart rejoiceth.

CONSTANTINE. So great is their wish to preserve their

virginity that neither threats nor entreaties may move them from their purpose.

GALLICANUS. May they remain steadfast, for so would I have it!

CONSTANTINE. Let us go in unto them.

GALLICANUS. Lead on; I follow.

CONSTANTINE. Behold, they come, accompanied by the illustrious Helen, my august mother. And they weep for very joy.

(*Enter* CONSTANCE, ATTICA, ARTEMIA, HELEN, PAUL *and* JOHN.)

GALLICANUS. Blessed be ye, O saintly virgins; live on in the fear of God, and above all else, may ye preserve the integrity of your virginity. Thus shall it come to pass that the King Everlasting shall deem you worthy to be His Brides.

CONSTANCE. And the more easily shall we preserve our virginity since we perceive that thou art not opposed to our desires.

GALLICANUS. No opposition do I voice, no hindrance nor obstacle do I raise up. Indeed, my beloved Constance, I bow to thy wish, and more than aught else do I wish that thou shouldest carry out to a good end what thy heart hath undertaken. Have I not won thee with great sacrifice and with my life's blood?

CONSTANTINE. This change of heart is the handiwork of God Almighty.

GALLICANUS. Had God not made a better man of me, scarce could I have subscribed to this thy wish.

CONSTANCE. May the patron Saint of all pure virgins, and may He Who strengtheneth all good resolutions, and Who turned thine heart aside from an evil purpose, join us together in heavenly bliss, even though, having accepted my virginity as His own, He hath today torn us from each other's arms.

GALLICANUS. So may it be.

CONSTANTINE. Since we are now made one in and by the Love of Christ in the same communion it is fitting that ye should be honored as members of the Emperor's family and that ye should dwell in all honor with us in the Imperial Palace.

GALLICANUS. The greatest of all temptation cometh through the eyes.

CONSTANTINE. Freely do I admit it.

GALLICANUS. Hence is it not fitting that mine eyes should

rest over-often upon a virgin whom, as well thou knowest, I love more than my parents, my life or my very soul.

CONSTANTINE. Do then as thou shalt wish.

GALLICANUS. Thanks to Jesus Christ and to mine own poor efforts, thou hast, today, an army fourfold increased. Let me, then, serve under the standard of mine Emperor in whose name I have been victorious, and to whom I owe all which in this life I have come to achieve.

CONSTANTINE. All glory be to Him; to Him be all thanks given! Let all creatures here below serve Him.

GALLICANUS. And more than all others, those whom, in the hour of danger He has befriended.

CONSTANTINE. So be it.

GALLICANUS. Of my worldly goods, one part I bestow upon my daughters as is right and just; one part I reserve unto myself that I may therewith succor those on pilgrimages; and with what remaineth I wish to enrich my slaves, whom I declare to be free, and to minister unto the poor.

CONSTANTINE. Most wisely hast thou made disposition of thy wordly goods, and thou shalt reap thy reward in Heaven.

GALLICANUS. As for myself, it is my greatest wish to journey unto Ostia there to become the close companion of that sainted man, Hilarianus, that I may conclude my life in praising God and in ministering to the poor.

CONSTANTINE. May God Everlasting, to Whom is all power, grant thee thy wish and permit thee to live according to His holy rule. And may He Who in glory reigneth, One in the Holy Trinity, lead thee to the joys of Paradise.

GALLICANUS. Amen.

AMEN

Insinuate morality, do not inflict it.—*Paine.*

Some books are to be tasted, others to be swallowed and some few to be chewed and digested.—*Francis Bacon.*

I tell you the clergy live by our sins; the medical faculty by our diseases and the law gentry by our misfortunes.—*W. Scott.*

OUR POESY IS AS A GUM

By Porter Sargent

Who are these who write poetry and out of what great tribulation have they come? Who are these arrayed in shining robes whom we call poets? Who are these from whom God has wiped away all tears that they now share with us their ecstasy?

Why doesn't the all round man, the corner druggist, the Rotarian, write poetry? Why is it that the fat, happy and prosperous do not exude great poetic lines?

Is it that there must be something just a little askew, some internal stress, to make the poet? Did not Shelley's turmoil, Keats' despair, Byron's roving passion, have something to do with making possible their great lines? Had they been typical of Napoleon's nation of English shopkeepers could they have written the poetry they did?

Run over the great poets in your mind. How many were in full harmony with their fellows, eye to eye, thought to thought with the mob? Shelley dazzled by visions others could not see, Byron distraught by his own infirmities, Keats facing near and certain death, Homer and Milton blind, Dante exiled,—we see the great poets, out of tune with their times. Had they been happy, prosperous, normal men how different their lives would have been, how unlikely their great lines would ever have been recorded.

True, there has been light and melodious verse poured forth from apparently healthy and simple minds. Father Tabb's marvellous etchings are as calm and clear as a winter's night, the product of a serene mind. But his was a detached and saintly life, his vision of God and the angels clear. Did mental stress precede?

And the love lyrics that last, were they not written under the influence of that strange and distracting heat, passion? However idealized and rapturized it was a temporary abnormal state, normal only at times and seasons.

So if we look upon poetry as a by product of human life, as a manifestation of human behavior, if we study under what conditions it has been produced and by whom, we may arrive at some understanding of the threadbare question,—what is poetry.

That we have poetry is the important thing, of course, not only for spiritual food, but to bring us new dreams, new visions to give new meanings to the commonplace, new glints from the crystal of life.

Two thin volumes published thirty years apart mark the two brief periods during which A. E. Housman produced poetry and perfected the lines on which his reputation rests. He tells how his lines came to him hot, while shaving or dressing, and then how he labored to build the missing lines he had failed to record.

It is not strange then that in his *The Name and Nature of Poetry* he refers to poetry as "a secretion; whether a natural secretion, like turpentine in the fir, or a morbid secretion, like the pearl in the oyster."

Four hundred years earlier Shakespeare had this same idea that poetry was a secretion or exudation. But with him the process was more or less continuous. So he makes his poet in *Timon of Athens* say: "Our poesy is as a gum which oozes from whence 'tis nourished."

There is something intriguing about this gum idea. Vegetable gums exuded from trees, the plant physiologist tells us, protect wounds against infections and invasions. The gum of poesy has protected many a human spirit.

Some aromatic gums like frankincense have entered into the exaltation of the spirit of man as incense in religious ritual. Some of the gums of ancient geologic time have been treasured and trafficked in through human history. And in amber we may find preserved in all perfection the most delicate wings that fanned the air millions of years ago.

But the most precious gum today is ambergris. Found afloat, washed up on beaches, an exudation of the internal organs of the whale, the best varieties bring enormous prices though much of poor quality is worthless. Its value is solely to give permanence to the most delicate perfumes, by fixing the essence. The use of ambergris makes it possible for us to enjoy perfumes created by the sunshine and the blossoms of other climes and other years.

Go where the jasmine is in bloom, where the air is filled with its fragrance if you would enjoy its perfume. But if you cannot go to Como or dwell in a Persian garden, if you cannot directly enjoy the sun's original distillation from the opening flowers which fills all the air about them, you may know something of the jasmine fragrance from the liquid perfume prepared from its petals.

It is the liquid in the vial, the distillate made permanent by the gum that we usually think of as perfume. But the contents of not every vial we buy is true to its label. And let it not be thought that all the ecstasy and rapture of the perfumes of a soft warm night in a Persian garden may come to one by holding a vial to his nostril.

Poetry, primitively and primarily, appeals to the auditory sense as perfumes do to the olfactory. Once strolling minstrels or wandering poets brought their verse direct to our ear, as we might be sprayed with perfume from an atomizer. Poetry today we usually think of as verses on a page making their appeal through the eye. But that's no more poetry than music is notes on the staff. "Music," said Walt Whitman, "is what awakens from you when you are reminded by the instruments."

A wandering minstrel or a Vachel Lindsay may achieve an effect directly on the ear that is dulled by the interpolation of the page. Elihu Vedder made his printed page expressive to the eye through his own hand drawn script and illustrations. Print imposes an added handicap on the poet which "e. e. cummings" has striven to capitalize through his own bizarre typography. But the test of this printed poetry is its appeal to the ear. Some is priceless. Much is spurious. Reams of it can be had without the asking.

So poetry, as we generally speak of it today, refers to marks or characters on the printed page which convey through the eye to the auditory sense, the rhythms, tone colors and meanings that the poet felt. We look at the black and white page and say: "This is poetry," because within us it has been transmuted into sound. This involves craftsmanship as well as art. Pure poetry is almost pure craftsmanship.

In the greatest poetry the craftsmanship is not apparent. But the burden of the art, the intensity of the feeling, may be too great for the technique. Such poetic lines, though imperfect, may be greater poetry than perfect craftsmanship, which carries a lesser burden. Great is the art of Shelley, or sensitive is the imaginative interpretation of his reader, if the lines bring to him the ecstasy that came to Shelley.

> "The champak odors fall
> Like sweet thoughts in a dream."

These lines and words are almost meaningless to a mere reader. Few who are deeply affected by them could know or

could ever be overcome by the perfume of the heavy temple flower champak. And odors do not fall. Neither do sweet thoughts. But the magic of the sounds and rhythms,—there is no rhyme,—put one in Shelley's state of ecstasy amid the perfumes of that Italian garden on that soft warm night.

Just as the perfume of flower or pine fills the circumambient air, so poetry at times is all about us.

> "The poetry of God is in the sounds of earth,
> In whisperings in the pines, in sighings on the shore,
> In desert hum of heat, in children's mirth."

Some are sensitively attuned so that at times they catch the overtones of this poetry, but they are impotent to transmit or make record. We say they are poetic. But the sensuous pleasure they receive is dulled by the lack of creative satisfactions that would come from having transmitted it to others. It leaves them longing for greater power of expression.

> "Am I free to give forth thought or feeling
> In verse, or paint, or song
> Till I can express myself,
> Until I set the ether vibrating with my thought
> And make the kilocycles sing with my emotion?"

And it is only at times that the fortunate few may receive clearly and transmute into words and rhythms some part of what has come to them. There is so much fading and static that if we do get something on paper the rhythm is broken or confused, the colors come untrue.

> "And there sometimes come to me
> To my ears or tongue
> Snatches of bitter sweet and heart felt song
> Reflecting resignation to age old wrong
> Or bits of lonely lovers lay
> Redolent of human clay."

We call him poet who can fix what has come to him in words and rhythms on the page as the perfume maker distills and fixes the flower's fragrance in a fluid. For the poet's job is to transmute into winged words and colorful rhythms what he has caught, sensed and felt, so that others through their auditory centers may get something of what came to him through his inner senses.

All Homer had to do was fix this in his mind and reproduce the feeling in his recital. But today the poet must fix it on the page, that it may be duplicated and enjoyed heedless of time and distance. We buy our poetry as we do our perfume in convenient packages made up to stand time and transport. But neither from

the page nor from the vial can we expect the full rapture which came to him who caught it.

What we get of the original poetry or of the perfume will depend upon the craftsmanship of him who fixes and packages it for our consumption. The poet's artistry resides in his sensitivity and receptivity to the previously unsensed harmonies about him. From these he selects and expurgates the superfluous so as to make these harmonies, before unknown to us, simple enough for our perception.

Just as most the perfume of the flowers escapes upon the desert air, little of the poetry about us is caught and fixed because too few of us are receptive, recordant, true poets.

> "But little of the ambient poetry about us
> Has yet been caught
> Like the perfume of roses in attar
> Or petals in a jar."

And even to him whom the world calls poet, how often have come throbbing lines when the means of recording them were so imperfect that only part was caught!

Coleridge rises in the night and puts on paper that fragment of Xanadu that we have,—but who can doubt that he failed to get down some of the lines that came tumbling into his consciousness, some of the tonal rhythms that he heard.

The greatest lines show no mark of the artificer. They came white hot, complete and perfect. Sometimes such lines come in the night or to the half conscious mind. Fortunate is the poet who can get down the few perfect lines that came to him, the others blurred. Then comes the later labor of fitting, matching, coloring the words and lines that make the setting.

So even in the greatest poems there are only a few perfect lines. They stand out clear as gems set in the matrix, the best that could be manufactured at an after time.

Poe held that "a long poem does not exist." For "a poem deserves its title only inasmuch as it excites, by elevating the soul. The value of the poem is in the ratio of this elevating excitement. But all excitements are, through a physical necessity, transient. That degree of excitement which would entitle a poem to be so called at all, cannot be sustained throughout a composition of any great length."

It is, then, the limitations of the poet, the recording apparatus, not the paucity of material nor the brevity of the theme, which determines that the greatest poems shall be short.

Great sensitivity, spiritual vitality, or deep faith are essential to the blossoming of great poetry. No ordinary all round man will record great poetic lines. For they come only to those who, in an abnormal state of receptivity, are just a little askew. Then rhythm and color come clear and poignant.

The great poets are all of one school whether they lived in China, India, Greece, or in barbarian lands. They belong to no time or place but to humanity. They differ in stature and their work is of varied genre, but they owe their distinction to having recorded and transmitted in terms of feeling to other humans what came to them from the circumambient. The great poets saw and heard harmonies and transmuted them in rhythm and color through words that others might feel what they had felt.

Now there is nothing occult about this idea that poetry lies all about us. Poetry is essentially the realization of harmonies in the world about or within ourselves. And of those who sense them only the few, through words and rhythms appealing to the ear, are able to bring their experience to and share their feelings with others.

Few of us can see or hear or find these harmonies. It is for the genius to point them out. Michelangelo, when he went to Carrara to labor in the quarries, was looking for the block of marble within which lay the sculpture that was in his mind. When he found the right block he had only to expurgate the superfluous marble, making the chips fly until his vision was revealed to all who came to see. In the *Accademia* at Florence we can see today in the great sculptures that he only half completed for the tomb of Julius II, the slaves and prisoners, half released from the marble, as Michelangelo saw them so clearly.

Times there have been when there were no great poets, or in which none were recognized so that their recordings have been preserved to us. Times there have been when sterility and artificiality were fashionable. So, after the great Greeks, there came the sensuous panderers in verse, and after the Renaissance there came the vicious influences that centered about Louis XIV and the artificial sterility of the century that followed.

In times of uncertainty and disillusionment like the present great achievement gives place to specious experiment which masquerades as 'new poetry.' New it may be in its typography. In its thinness or unintelligibility there is nothing new about it. It may presage the coming of great things, but as yet it has not revealed them.

There is nothing new about the poetry that seeks to probe inner meanings, to utilize new knowledge, whether it be of the origin of things or of the faulty workings of man's mind and glands. There may be new realizations, new revelations, new understandings, or a new emphasis, but there will be no new poetry until we have new rhythms,—new tides within us.

But the great tradition of English poetry, and of all poetry, is a living tradition which continues to produce new growth. Meredith in his *Modern Love* revealed a whole new field for poetic expression. Conrad Aiken, using his Freudian probe, with his colorful rhythms, has enlarged the realm of poetry, but still in the great tradition.

It is fashionable today to deny the great tradition in poetry and to praise the 'new poetry.' Sophistication, novelty and audacity are applauded. No serious purpose or great end is admitted. These poetasters superciliously deride Shelley because he believed that poetry might regenerate mankind, and Matthew Arnold, because he thought that poetry might save us from mental chaos. These sophisticates never had a compelling feeling in their lives. Their endocrine systems remain in perfect balance. Their emotions go no deeper than their vasomotor systems.

With what burning disdain would old Homer, Shelley, or Whitman have greeted these poetasters! Many of them are not live men, they are mere burned out shells,—reverts. Even when they feel the need of religion, they can find nothing within themselves. They must crawl into the carapace of a worn out catholicism. From such can never come that poetry vibrant with the inner rhythms, which sharpens our senses, enlarges our emotions for what is, and leads us on to things that are not, but yet may be.

The school of poetry recently in vogue was born in academic shades, withered in academic sophistication. It derived its inspiration from the poets of the barren centuries, seen through the distorted green glass of modern disillusionment.

Let us have poets who will stimulate us, not necessarily to regenerate, but to lead us on to heights of feeling and achievement yet unreached. With the present state of the world and of the people in it, there are still great untrodden fields for poets.

> "Poets whose burning lines have fired youth
> To aspiration or revolt in other lands."

Time and tone are the only two elements the poet has to work with to convey his poetry to his hearer. When we speak of

the color of words we mean the tone color. With tone colors timed, rhymed, accented, Coleridge "In Xanadu did Kubla Khan," plays upon something within us,—pulse and glands—to produce emotional response.

Timing gives us rhythm, accent, quantity, rate of flow. Through these the sounds of words are adjusted to the timing to produce an emotional effect and to relate themselves to the tides within us.

Rhythm is everywhere in everything—and all life responds to rhythm within and without.

"The flow of the tides is within me,
The diurnal pulse of the sea."

The great fundamental rhythm on this earth is due to the pull of the moon on the seas. Twice daily the tides rise and fall, working up to two crescendos each lunar month or twenty-eight day period. Even if the seas dried up and tides were no more this rhythm would still be perpetuated in us.

"For out of the sea all life came
Ere there was land. And daily the earth
Is returning to the depths that gave it birth.
Even the everlasting hills were born within thy womb,
Oh, ocean, let thy deepest caverns be my tomb."

Primitively we are still sea animals. However far we may live from where the salt spray is the constant accompaniment of life, the tides are so fundamentally within us that though we live emotionally inspired by the illimitable plain or pampas or delighting in rugged mountain fastnesses and Alpine peaks, the rhythm of the tides is inherent. From the steppes of Asia where the acrid smoke of camel dung fires hangs at sunset, out of the depths of the Congo where the tom-tom beats, come the most potent rhythms to set our pulses dancing.

We may look beyond the firmament and see other worlds. We may reach out our hands among the stars. Still we will feel the pull of the moon and know the fluctuating power of the sun.

"When the stars beckon
To this child of earth
With the moon I must reckon
Though the sun gave me birth."

Rhythm and tone may give us pure poetry, technically perfect, may bring emotional response, even when the words in themselves mean nothing.

"The lilycop is stone and staur
The gasket on its gimbels grates
And over all the scene a shade
Is thrown by even early lates."

Rhythm, both in poetry and in music, may extend even to the content. In music it may be the recurring theme or motif, while in Oriental poetry, as in the song of Solomon, the rhythmic repetition of the thought or image gives much of the characteristic appeal.

There are those so absorbed in perfection of technique or in admiration of it that they deny the possibility that poetry may carry an intellectual content. The virtuoso who sees an end in perfect technique we may pardon. Our applause, however, will go to him who perfects technique as a means of conveying feelings and meanings. We can hardly pardon the unimaginative and unproductive critics who deny that these noble means of expression, poetry and music, are able to carry any burden of thought as well as feeling. They have been misled by those who have over freighted their verse or their music with an intellectual program too weighty for the depth of feeling.

Emotion without intellect, passion without purpose, cannot long satisfy those who are capable of responding to more potent stimuli or more varied implications. Our endocrine and vasomotor systems have developed through the ages parallel with our brains. Emotion without intellectual background, without understanding of the meaning and potency of things must result in a thin, unbalanced life.

To one whose mind is stored with understandings and interpretations, to whom the world has meaning, a deeper response is possible. Poetry for such will bring a more profound reaction if the toned and rhymed words in rhythmic lines carry meanings.

The great poets move us profoundly because of their deep insight and understanding which they express in terms of feeling. Intellect fed their emotional life. The greatest poetry appeals most completely to the whole man and relates itself to his experience as well as to his yearnings.

THE DEVIL'S DOLL

By Mary Margaret Russell

Based on *A Mirror for Witches*, by permission of the author, Esther Forbes

Characters

Elisha Wentworth, *a minister*
Hannah Wentworth, *his wife*
Doll, *their adopted daughter*
Thomas Waite, *Doll's suitor*
Scene: *A Massachusetts village. The kitchen in Mr. Wentworth's house.*
Time: *An afternoon in the spring of 167—*

The room is the "hall," or rather the living room and kitchen combined, of a sturdy but beautiful Early American house. The Left wall is finished with pine sheathing. Up stage Left is a small unpanelled door. Down stage Left is a great fireplace framed with a heavy hewn lintel and upright panelling of pine. A pot hangs over the fire and an iron kettle sits upon the hearth. In the center of the back wall is a large door opening on the outside. This door is strengthened by cross-pieces and ornamented by nail heads set in a diamond pattern. To the right of the entrance door is an old chest, to the left a huge elaborately carved cupboard. On the cupboards are a few pieces of pewter. A little to the left of the door, two-thirds of the way back from the footlights, is a small square table covered with a Turkey carpet. To the right of the table is a four-legged stool. Farther to the right and more downstage is a large straight armchair. There is a little unpanelled door down stage Right. Hannah's *high ladder-back chair is by the fireplace. The ceiling is formed by boards of the upper floor resting on cross beams and rafters.*

Hannah Wentworth, *a hard, self-righteous woman, forty years old, is sitting in the chair by the fireplace, carefully paring her nails with a small knife. She is nervous, and looks around as if afraid of being watched. She finishes the ninth nail, lays it with those previously pared on a black cloth in her lap, and counts all the nails carefully. There are nine.* Hannah *begins paring the tenth when the door opens and* Doll *enters so quietly that* Hannah *does not hear her.* Doll *is a slim dark girl of eighteen. She wears a bright red taffeta frock. She stands in the door a moment, looking*

sadly off stage Left, then closes the door, comes downstage, and sits in the chair Right of table. HANNAH *is unconscious of her presence until she speaks.*

DOLL. Hannah, is my Father here? (HANNAH *jumps up, frightened, and clutches the black cloth and nail parings to her bosom.*)

HANNAH. You—Doll!

DOLL. Forgive me. I did not mean to startle you.

HANNAH. How came you here? How came you in this room?

DOLL. Through yonder door. I—

HANNAH. No tricks, girl! Tell none of your lies to me. Did you grow out of air or smoke? Did you pass through the door like a wraith?

DOLL. No, Hannah!

HANNAH. Whence came you, then? I heard no sound.

DOLL. I had just been to Waite's.

HANNAH. To Waite's! You dared go to that house of sorrow?

DOLL. Hannah, is it true that Mitty's ill?

HANNAH. Know you not?

DOLL. I only heard of it today. Oh, tell me, is it true?

HANNAH. What did they tell you at Waite's?

DOLL. Nothing.

HANNAH. Whom did you see?

DOLL. Only Mistress Goodnow.

HANNAH. Anne Goodnow should tell you aplenty.

DOLL. She told me nothing. She came to the door and when I said I had come to see Mitty, she screamed and shut the door in my face. Hannah, why should she treat me so? I have done nothing. You know I have done nothing. Even you seem afraid of me. Why is it, Hannah, why?

HANNAH. You can answer that better than I, Mistress Dolly.

DOLL. Oh, Hannah, be not harsh with me. Help me. Tell me what is the matter with Mitty. I have not seen her since last Thursday.

HANNAH. You have seen that child enough, and to her sorrow.

DOLL. I?

HANNAH. I should think she would dread the very sight of you or the sound of your name.

DOLL. What has happened, Hannah? Does she love me no longer?

HANNAH. Love you? Does the dog love the master who beats him? Does the child love the nurse who feeds him poison? Love you? How can you expect her to love you when you have brought so much evil upon her?

DOLL. I have not harmed her. I would not harm anyone, least of all a little child like Mitty. Hannah, you must believe me. (DOLL *starts pleadingly towards* HANNAH *who leaps from her chair and stands as if on guard.*)

HANNAH. Keep off from me, Doll!

DOLL (*still advancing*). But, Hannah—

HANNAH. Keep off, I say. I know what you want. You want to get me in your power as you got poor Mitty Waite. You want to make a poppet of me with bits of my nail parings and combings from my hair stuffed in its stomach. Then you can torture me as you now torture her. Yet why, Mistress Dolly, tell me why. The Waites are rich, but you have no need of their money. My husband is as good to you as if you were his own child. Ah, 'tis nothing but your evil heart that prompts you, but you'll get no parings of mine. No, Mistress, I've got them every one and I'll burn them before you get your hands on them. (*She throws the parings in the fire.*) There! Now you can come and go as you like but you'll make no poppets of me! (*There is a knock at the door. Both start to open it.*)

HANNAH. Nay, let me open it. (*She does so and starts back in surprise at seeing* THOMAS WAITE.)

HANNAH. Thomas Waite! (WAITE *is a handsome youth, admired and sought after by all the girls in the village but* DOLL. *She is so retiring that she attracts his own retiring nature. He is beautifully dressed in dark green cloth and fine linen. He is a student and eager for knowledge, but as yet immature, a fledgling.*)

THOMAS. Good evening, Mistress Hannah. Good evening, Doll. (DOLL *bows shyly.*)

HANNAH. Sit down, Thomas. Have this chair. How is little Mitty? Is she worse?

THOMAS. Yes, Mistress Hannah, she is very ill, more ill than the leech thought she could be.

HANNAH. What does he say? Does he think she will recover?

THOMAS. He knows not what to say. He is much puzzled.

HANNAH (*leaning forward malignantly*). Does the *bat* still torture her?

THOMAS. She says it does, but it cannot, Mistress Hannah. There is no bat. 'Tis but a phantom of her fevered brain. She has worked herself into a delirium for having heard too many witch tales.

HANNAH. 'Tis not the witch tales that have made your sister ill, Thomas.

THOMAS. What?

HANNAH. 'Tis the witches!

THOMAS. Mistress Hannah!

HANNAH. Aye, 'tis some witch, Thomas Waite, that has worked an evil spell on your sister.

THOMAS. I do not believe it!

HANNAH. And I daresay your wise leech does not believe it either?

THOMAS. That he does not. He is skilled in medicine, not in magic.

HANNAH. Let him beware lest he trust his skill too far. More than that is needed to cure the sick.

THOMAS. He is a good man, Mistress Hannah, and he is wise. What more can you ask?

HANNAH. He must have faith, and the fear of God and God's enemies in his heart. He must fear Satan for Satan is the god of witches and the enemy of the most high.

THOMAS (*standing*). Mistress Hannah! I expected not to hear such talk from you. I have studied with your husband nearly three years now, preparing myself for the ministry, and I have heard him say again and again that Satan is not—that there is only a God of truth and light. He has taught me to believe as he does. I thought certainly his wife did likewise.

HANNAH (*also standing*). No, thank heaven, I do not believe him! I know that as surely as there is a God there is a Devil, and as long as there is breath in my body I will fight a good fight against the fiend . . . It grieves me much, Thomas, that my husband should lead so good a youth as you from the paths of righteousness and I pray that you may see the error of your ways before it is too late.

THOMAS. I pray, Mistress Hannah, that one day my faith may equal Mr. Wentworth's. Few enough believe him now, I know. They do not deem his merciful God worthy of worship. But he has taught me to love him so much that there is no room in my heart for the Devil.

HANNAH. I have heard men before—though only a few,

praise be—who said they believed in God and not in the Devil, and who in their hearts believed in neither, for how can there be a God if there is no Devil, and how can there be Good if there be not Evil? . . . If you loved your sister as you should, you would get a leech with the fear of God in his heart. I know of such a one in Boston, Mr. William Moseley. When he sees a child suffering as Mitty suffers he sets about to find the witch that torments her. Then he hangs the witch! Mark my words, Thomas Waite, if the witch who is torturing Mitty is once destroyed, Mitty will recover. If not—

THOMAS. I had come to speak with Doll, Mistress Hannah. May I see her a few moments alone?

HANNAH. Certainly you may. I shall leave you. But should you need me, Thomas, I shall be near at hand.

THOMAS. Thank you, Mistress Hannah. (*He follows* HANNAH *to door left, opens it for her and bows slightly as she goes out. Then he closes the door and turns, a bit hesitatingly, to* DOLL.)

THOMAS. Doll, I—am so sorry.

DOLL. I did not know Mitty was ill until today, Thomas. Then—

THOMAS. I know, Doll. I came to ask your pardon. Mistress Goodnow had no right to treat you so in our house. We did not know you were there.

DOLL (*frightened, as if she is afraid to hear his answer*). Thomas, is Mitty going to die?

THOMAS (*evasively*). I do not know, we cannot tell.

DOLL. Do you think she is bewitched?

THOMAS (*eager to have her understand his feeling in the matter*). No, Doll!

DOLL. Does the leech think so?

THOMAS. No, no. Neither of us do. 'Tis only foolish old women who say such things.

DOLL (*tensely, as if he must know this, whatever else he learns*). Thomas, I love Mitty, I love all the children hereabout.

THOMAS. I know you do.

DOLL. But I love Mitty best.

THOMAS. She loves you. She cries for you in her delirium.

DOLL (*as if she must get the truth*). Then why did Mistress Goodnow keep me from her? Why did she not let me see her?

THOMAS. Mitty is so ill, Doll.

DOLL (*not misled by his evasion*). Yet I'll warrant Mistress

Goodnow sees her. Thomas, why did Mistress Goodnow scream when she saw me?

THOMAS. She is foolish. Oh, ask me no more.

DOLL. Why did she do it, Thomas? Why did she shut the door in my face?

THOMAS (*under his breath*). She was afraid.

DOLL. Afraid of me? (*He nods weakly.*) Does she think I would harm Mitty?

THOMAS. She feared you might.

DOLL. Does she think I have power—*evil* power—over Mitty?

THOMAS (*protestingly*). Doll!

DOLL. She thinks I am a witch!

THOMAS. 'Tis not true, Doll!

DOLL. But she thinks so, doesn't she, Thomas? She thinks so?

THOMAS. Yes. But I know you are not!

DOLL. Thomas, I have not caused Mitty's illness. Truly I have not.

THOMAS. I know it.

DOLL. I love her too much . . . Thomas—if she should die—I—should die of loneliness. She and my Father are the only friends I have ever had.

THOMAS (*hurt*). Don't say that, Doll.

DOLL. Mitty is only a child, yet—

THOMAS. You are yourself a child in many ways. Do you not still play with dollies?

DOLL (*frightening*). Yes! Mitty and I play with our dollies together.

THOMAS. You are old enough to cast aside such toys.

DOLL (*quickly*). Oh, I can never cast them aside. They are wholly mine. They are more real to me than you or Mitty or my Father, and even more dear. They are mine because I made them, and I shall always keep them. Don't you see?

THOMAS (*gently*). You know I love you, Doll. (DOLL *tries to hush his declaration.*)

THOMAS. I did not mean to speak of it again until you gave me leave. But I must, Doll. You are in danger. If Mitty dies they may hang you for a witch. (DOLL *shudders. She realizes for the first time what her fate may be.* THOMAS *goes on more quickly.*) Oh, I know you are not, but who would believe me? Only yesterday Mitty cried out for you in her sleep. I knew it

was because she loved you and wanted you near her, but straightway Mistress Goodnow proclaimed that your spirit was in the body of the bat and that Mitty was crying to you for mercy . . . She is mad, Doll. Mistress Hannah is mad. The whole country is stricken with a witch fever. They would never see your innocence if they wished to believe your guilt.

DOLL (*helplessly*). What shall I do?

THOMAS. Let me protect you. My father is rich. He has influence, power. If you are my wife, you will be safe. Oh, Doll, marry me.

DOLL. I cannot, Thomas.

THOMAS. But, Doll, I love you.

DOLL. I do not love you, Thomas.

THOMAS. Doll—

DOLL. I do not love you.

THOMAS. Only give me the right to keep you safe then. When you are no more a lonely maid but my wife, they will not dare to speak a word against you.

DOLL. I would not make you a proper wife.

THOMAS. You would make the kind of wife I want.

DOLL. Nay, hear me. I am no fit wife for Christian man. My mother and my father both were burned in Brittany when I was a small child—my mother for a witch, my father for a warlock. I can see them now. I can close my eyes and see them as very tiny creatures far away. I can see the flames that were their death and hear their screams. I see myself as a little child alone, watching them and answering their screams with mine. (*Covering her eyes and screaming fearfully*) Oh, Thomas, Thomas, save me from the flames. They are coming nearer, nearer! Save me!

THOMAS. Doll, my darling. My dear. There are no flames. There shall be no flames. They do not burn—even witches—in New England.

DOLL (*shuddering*). I am afraid.

THOMAS. Nothing shall harm you. I love you.

DOLL (*quickly regaining control of herself*). Then leave me.

THOMAS. Doll—

DOLL. Leave me. You see it would not do to marry me.

THOMAS. Dear Doll, forget these visions. They do not change my love for you. They make me want to care for you all the more.

DOLL. I have not told you everything. Perhaps—

THOMAS. Nothing will make me cease to love you, Doll.

DOLL. You do not know.

THOMAS. Nothing. Nothing. I swear it, Doll. Nothing can change me. I beg you to be my wife.

DOLL. That I can never do. 'Tis best that you should go.

THOMAS. Let me stay.

DOLL. Nay, go. (*He looks at her hopelessly, turns and goes to the door.*)

DOLL. Thomas! (*He stops, she goes to him, holding out her hand. He takes it.*)

DOLL. You are good, Thomas.

THOMAS. I love you, Doll. (*He holds her hand for a moment, looking searchingly at her, then goes out.* DOLL *comes down slowly, sits right. Looks around her, feels among the folds of her dress, takes out a little home-made doll, strokes it, smooths its dress, holds it lovingly to her cheek, kisses it, rocks it in her arms like a baby.*)

DOLL (*crooning*). Baby, baby, sweet, sweet baby. Cold, dear? Cold, darling? (*She gets up, snuggling the doll in her arms, glances around again, and goes to the fireplace. She kneels and holds the doll to the fire as if showing it the fire and warming it.*)

DOLL. See the fire, sweetest? The pretty, pretty flame? (*She suddenly shrinks back in terror, shielding the baby.*)

DOLL. Nay, not too near, my darling, not too near! Oh my sweet, art thou warm? Warm, my precious? (*She is still holding the doll to the fire when* HANNAH *enters left.* HANNAH *stalks up behind her.*)

HANNAH. Give me that poppet!

DOLL (*springing to her feet*). Nay!

HANNAH. Give me that poppet, I tell you!

DOLL (*backing right away from her*). Do not take her from me, Hannah! Do not! (DOLL'S *back is against the door right.* HANNAH *forces the doll from her.* DOLL *cowers against the door.*)

HANNAH. There, my pretty witch! I'll put an end to your fine schemes of torture.

DOLL. Give me my dolly!

HANNAH. That I shall never do. I have caught you an stopped you in the midst of wickedness. No more shall you hold this to the flame that Mitty Waite may burn with fever. No more shall you stuff it with pins and stick it with needles that an innocent child may suffer tortures of the damned.

DOLL. Give me my dolly, Hannah.

HANNAH. Nay, Mistress, I have the instrument of your sin and I shall keep it until I give it into better hands than mine. You shall do no more evil in this house.

DOLL. I have done no evil.

HANNAH. Your lies will not avail you now, Doll. I have seen you with my own eyes slowly burning this poppet at the hearth that Mitty Waite may die. But I am not surprised. I have known you for a witch since Elisha first brought you here, a child, screaming for your parents who had perished in the flames. You were strange then, like one possessed of the Devil, and whenever I see you seized by a fit of anger, indeed I think you are the Devil's, body and soul.

DOLL (*almost tearfully*). Had you loved me as your child—

HANNAH. You dare say that to me, girl? You dare? You who are the cause I have no child? You blasted the babe in my womb when 'twas but three months grown that you might hold its place in my husband's heart. With one look of yours you did it though you were hardly more than a babe yourself.

DOLL. You know that is not true.

HANNAH. Not true, not true? You did it in this very room. I can see it now as clearly as if it happened yesterday . . . It was a stormy night and I sat here by a dying fire, waiting for Elisha. You had been with us but a short while and though I liked you not, my thoughts were not of you. I dreamed of the babe that was to be mine. Then suddenly the door to the inner room flew open and the place was filled with a strange glare. I thought it was the lightning, the storm outside. I ran to close the door, and then I saw you . . . Oh, do you wonder that I have shunned you ever since? I saw you, a little dark mite, standing on the threshold, and your eyes, your awful, shining eyes, burning me, burning through me, burning my babe. (DOLL *is standing directly in front of the door* HANNAH *mentioned in her story, and her eyes have been getting brighter and brighter as* HANNAH *talked. The room is dark except for the firelight against which* HANNAH *throws a heavy, dark silhouette. The light from the fire shines directly on* DOLL.)

DOLL (*slowly. With great power. In a tense, mature voice she has not used before*). You are lying, Hannah Wentworth.

HANNAH (*recoiling with horror*). Doll!

DOLL. You have always hated me. You thought to rid yourself of me by telling such a tale as this.

HANNAH. Do not look at me! Ah, wicked girl!

DOLL (*advancing toward* HANNAH). Nay, 'tis you who are wicked for you would make me wicked with your very thoughts.

HANNAH (*shielding her face*). Take your evil eyes from me.

DOLL (*commandingly*). Give me my dolly.

HANNAH. Do not look at me!

DOLL. Give me my doll!

HANNAH (*writhing*). Oh, have mercy!

DOLL (*holding out her hand. In a tone of finality*). My doll, Hannah!

HANNAH (*giving her the doll. Still shielding her eyes*). Take it. (DOLL *takes her plaything and begins fondling it happily as she slowly walks center.* HANNAH *still cringes by the fireplace, furtively watching* DOLL. MR. WENTWORTH *enters quickly center back. He is tall and lean, wise and sincere. He wears a plain black suit and a high black hat. His hair is iron grey.*)

ELISHA (*stopping, surprised*). Hannah! Doll!

DOLL (*running to him*). Father!

ELISHA (*his arm about* DOLL. *Going to* HANNAH). Hannah, my dear, what is the matter? Why are you—

HANNAH. Let her not come near me, Elisha. She is evil.

ELISHA. Who are you talking about? What has happened?

HANNAH. She tried to bewitch me. She has the evil eye.

ELISHA. Tell me what has happened, dear.

HANNAH. That girl has a poppet—ah, she holds it now—that will be the death of Mitty Waite if you do not take it from her. I found her here burning it by our hearth, and I tell you that by so doing she was killing Mitty Waite with the Devil's own fire.

ELISHA. I do not understand. What have you there, Doll?

DOLL. Only my doll, father.

HANNAH. I tell you, Elisha, it is a poppet and an instrument of the Devil.

ELISHA (*to* DOLL). What were you doing with it?

DOLL. Nothing, father, but holding it as you have seen me do so many times.

ELISHA (*reassuringly to* HANNAH). There, you see, dear, the child was only playing with her doll. You would have seen her at it before this had you not forbade her to bring her playthings in the house.

HANNAH. I tell you, Elisha, this is no common doll. 'Tis a magic poppet such as witches make when they would do some evil. That girl is the Devil's servant.

ELISHA (*sternly*). Hannah, there is no Devil, unless he be in your own heart.

HANNAH. Oh, I knew you would not believe me. She has beguiled you so you will not listen to your wife. (*Trembling*) Elisha, I am afraid. She has threatened me.

ELISHA. What is this, Doll?

DOLL. She took my doll away from me. I made her give it back.

ELISHA. Hannah, I am surprised.

HANNAH. She is a witch, Elisha. I tell you, I fear her.

ELISHA. Oh, my dear, be calm. There are no witches and there is no Devil. There is only one God and He is Good.

HANNAH. 'Tis easy enough for you to say there are no witches. You won't admit that there are. You are afraid to hunt them down and punish them as is your duty as a man of God. You are afraid—because you harbor a witch in your own house!

ELISHA. Hannah!

HANNAH. The whole town knows it. And they'll have you no more for a minister if you do not turn her out. Oh, I beg you, cast her from our door, that this house may be fair once more in the sight of God.

ELISHA. I have taken this child for my own, and I shall keep her. God has given us no child. I prayed that you might love this one as I do.

HANNAH. I love her? I love her? I shall tell all the town she is a witch's brat!

ELISHA. You shall not!

DOLL (*clinging to him*). Father!

HANNAH. Ah, I shall not have to tell them much! They know the maid in scarlet taffety who bewitches little children. They say the Devil gave her her fine clothes.

ELISHA. You know I bought this frock for Doll myself.

HANNAH. Ay, so you did. But others are not so wise. And they wonder that she does not wear a black frock, as that is the garb she dons when she goes witching.

ELISHA. What are you talking of?

HANNAH. Ah, I have not told you all her tricks. She goes in the shape of a bat to Mitty Waite's bed, and flies over her and torments her. Her spirit is in the body of the bat, and if the bat is struck the witch will perish.

ELISHA. Hannah, where did you hear these falsehoods?

HANNAH. They are no falsehoods, Elisha, but the truth as every man and woman in this town will tell you. I know. You've tried hard enough to destroy their faith, but they are staunch in the fear of God and Satan. Had they a leader they would show their zeal's as great as any in Boston or Salem.

ELISHA. I did not dream you were so credulous.

HANNAH. I am a Christian, Elisha.

ELISHA. Yet this is savage talk.

HANNAH (*fiercely*). Savage, eh? Then Mr. Increase Mather and Mr. Joseph Ainsworth and Mr. John Ludlow are savages, are they? They're better ministers than you—though God knows I have prayed that you might see your duty and be a power for good as they have done. They know hanging's the only cure for a witch—the only way to rid her of her sin and free her soul for heaven.

DOLL. Father, do not let them harm me!

ELISHA. No, no, my dear. Be not afraid.

HANNAH. Nay, rather, let her fear. Only the fear of God can save her now.

ELISHA. Hannah!

HANNAH (*her right arm raised, her finger pointing toward heaven*). Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live! The Bible says that, Elisha . . . 'Tis God's own Word. Will you not heed it?

ELISHA. You are merciless.

HANNAH. To a witch?

ELISHA. Do not say that word again!

HANNAH. Why not? Is any name too vile for one who sells herself to the Devil? Sells herself, body and soul, to the Prince of Lust?

DOLL. Hannah!

ELISHA. Doll, know you aught of this?

HANNAH. Does she know? The whole village knows! Mistress Goodnow has seen her meeting with the Devil in the forest. Mind you, Mistress Goodnow did not see the Devil—she is a righteous woman—but Doll saw him, talked to him plainly as I'm talking to you now, called him by his name, bowed down and worshipped him, kissed him—

ELISHA (*troubled*). I beg you say no more.

HANNAH. And I beg you to send that wanton away from us. Oh, Elisha, send her away. She terrifies me. I pray you, clear the house of her.

DOLL. Don't, father!

ELISHA. My little girl.

HANNAH. You won't turn her out?

ELISHA. I cannot, Hannah. This is the only home she has

DOLL. Father!

ELISHA. My Doll!

HANNAH. The Devil's Doll! I leave you, Elisha, to decide between that girl and me. (*She goes out angrily.*)

ELISHA. Hannah!

DOLL. Do you want me to go, father?

ELISHA. No, no, my dear. This is your home. You must stay here. I wish I had some better place to take you.

DOLL. Hannah may never come back if you keep me.

ELISHA. I pray she will, and at peace with you and me. Think not of the things she said, my dear. They are old wives' tales and fraught with danger for a high-strung maid. Think not of them.

DOLL (*hesitatingly*). Father—

ELISHA. What is it, Doll?

DOLL (*trying to make a confession*). Perhaps I am wicked—

ELISHA. Dear, you are as innocent as a babe. It is your very innocence they cannot understand. Oh, forget them if you can. 'Tis this very talk has caused Mitty Waite's delirium, and such has brought many a harmless maid to confess herself a witch in the market place.

DOLL. But—

ELISHA (*brooding*). That poor sick child.

DOLL (*earnestly*). I have not harmed her. Truly I have not.

ELISHA. Of course you have not. I spoke with the leech this morning and he gave the lie to all this witch talk. But, oh, my darling, if the child should die. God only knows what would become of you.

DOLL. Father—no matter what else I have done—I have not caused Mitty's illness.

ELISHA. I know. dear.

DOLL. But, father—

ELISHA (*noticing that she is trying to tell him something*). Yes?

DOLL. There is—

ELISHA. What, dear?

DOLL. Something—

ELISHA. What are you trying to say?

DOLL. The Devil is—

ELISHA (*worried*). Tell me, Doll!

DOLL (*struggling*). I want to. (*Quickly covering her face with her hands*) Oh, no, I cannot, I cannot! (*Enter* THOMAS *quickly, without knocking. He is visibly perturbed.*)

THOMAS. Mr. Wentworth! Doll!

ELISHA. What is it, Thomas?

THOMAS. My sister is dying. People are gathered at our house now, waiting for the sheriff. They're coming after Doll—to jail her.

DOLL. Do not let them take me!

ELISHA. My darling!

THOMAS. And on my way here, I met Mistress Hannah. She is going to excite the crowd still more. She would have them burn her.

DOLL. Father! Father! I shall die if I see the flames!

ELISHA. My dear, there are no burnings in New England.

THOMAS. But I tell you, they'll take her to jail!

ELISHA. They will try her.

THOMAS. Does that mean anything? A woman accused of witchcraft is as good as condemned. The end is the gallows.

DOLL. Oh, save me!

THOMAS. I can save her if she is my wife. My father's position will save her. Oh, Mr. Wentworth, I love her. Tell her—

ELISHA. What do you say, Doll?

DOLL. I cannot marry Thomas.

THOMAS. Doll, you must! Oh, forgive me, dear, but think of your life. I love you. I will do anything for you. Oh, Doll—

DOLL. No, no, Thomas, I cannot.

ELISHA. My dear, I hate to force you. Indeed, I will not. But this seems the only way.

DOLL. Father, I—

ELISHA (*gently, trying to help her*). Is there any reason why you cannot marry Thomas?

DOLL. I do not love him.

THOMAS. I will not ask your love, Doll.

DOLL. I—love someone else!

ELISHA AND THOMAS. Doll!

ELISHA. Who is it? Tell us. Let us see what we can do.

DOLL. He—father, let me speak to Thomas.

ELISHA. You—do not want—me here?

DOLL. No, I'm sorry, Father.

ELISHA. That's all right, Doll. (*He goes out right.*)

THOMAS. Doll, who is this man?

DOLL. He is no man, Thomas.

THOMAS. What do you mean?

DOLL. He is not of heaven or earth. He is Satan! He is the Devil!

THOMAS (*aghast*). The Devil your lover!

DOLL. Yes!

THOMAS. I do not believe it. This is absurd. How long have you suffered under this delusion?

DOLL. 'Tis no delusion. Satan is my lover. He has comforted me when I was sad and lonely.

THOMAS. Doll! . . . This is a trick! . . . There is no Devil!

DOLL (*angrily*). There is no Devil? Thomas Waite, I have seen him with my own eyes. He is fairer than any man on earth. I am promised to him.

THOMAS (*horrified*). But he will be your death!

DOLL (*proud and certain*). He will not! I am no longer afraid. I know that nothing can hurt me so long as I am his and true to him before all the world. Though I hung on Gallows Hill even now, he would come to me and save me. (*Enraptured, her eyes half closed*) If I but called him he would come this moment, and I would go to him and welcome him. (*She holds out her arms, slowly, in a gesture of welcome.*)

THOMAS (*amazed*). 'Tis a dream!

DOLL (*turning on him*). 'Tis no dream, I tell you! He is as real as you are, as my father, as my dolly. (*She is holding the doll.*)

THOMAS. Give me that doll!

DOLL (*hugging the toy*). No, no!

THOMAS (*hurt and angry*). Give it me, I say! You have driven me mad for love of you, and you have spent your love on nothing better than cornstalk dolls and imaginary devils. (*He takes the doll from her and goes toward the fire with it. She follows him, pleading.*)

DOLL. My doll, Thomas! (THOMAS *throws the doll in the fire and turns to her.*)

THOMAS. There! May it be nothing more than a charred memory!

DOLL. You burned my doll!

THOMAS (*going toward her to take her in his arms*). Yes! I am going to save you in spite of your dreams and visions.

DOLL (*passionately*). You burned my doll!

THOMAS (*his arms outstretched*). I love you. Kiss me! (DOLL *looks at him intently. Then she grasps his arm and, without taking her eyes from his face, suddenly and with great venom, bites his wrist.* THOMAS *recoils terrified.*)

THOMAS (*in a hoarse voice*). Witch! (*He shrinks back from her.* DOLL *advances on him. Her whole body trembles. Her hands are out, like claws, to choke him.*)

DOLL. You burned my dolly! You burned my dolly! Oh, I hate you! I curse you!

THOMAS (*shielding his eyes*). Do not look at me, Doll!

DOLL. I curse you to all eternity!

THOMAS. Take your evil eyes from me!

DOLL. May you burn, Thomas! May you burn in the Devil's own fire!

THOMAS. God have mercy! (*In the agony of his fear, he reaches for a pewter candlestick on the table and strikes her with it. She falls with a low moan.* THOMAS *stands dumbfounded for a moment. Then*)

THOMAS. Doll! (*He bends over her. His nerves go to pieces. He weeps.*)

THOMAS. Doll! Doll! Forgive me. Oh, speak to me, Doll! Speak to me! Oh, oh, my God! (HANNAH *enters, vengeful, triumphant.*)

HANNAH. Thomas Waite! What do you here? Your sister has just died! (THOMAS *stands staring at* DOLL.)

THOMAS. Doll!

HANNAH (*spying* DOLL). What's this? Ah, Mistress, I knew I'd find you down. They've struck the bat that tortured Mitty Waite and you are fallen! Get you home, Thomas. Get home to your sorrowing mother.

THOMAS. Mistress Hannah, Doll—is dead!

HANNAH. What, boy? I shall attend to Doll! Get you home to your own dead!

THOMAS. Doll! Doll!

HANNAH (*shaking him*). Can you not hear me, boy? Your sister's dead! (THOMAS *stares at* HANNAH. *He is so distressed about* DOLL *that he does not realize what she is telling him.*)

THOMAS. Mistress Hannah, Doll—I, I—(*He starts to bend*

over DOLL *again.* HANNAH *grasps him by the shoulder and takes him to the door. He is too broken to resist her.*)

HANNAH. Begone!` Your sister died while you paid court to the witch that killed her! Out of this house! Out with you! (*She puts him out, closes the door and, keeping a malignant eye on* DOLL, *bolts it.*)

HANNAH. Ah, Doll, you've done enough evil in this world. (DOLL *moves feebly.*)

HANNAH. Not dead, eh? So then one blow is not enough? Anne Goodnow struck you as the bat, but I shall strike you as the witch you are. I'll put the fear of God in you and make you confess to the whole town how you destroyed Mitty Waite. (HANNAH *goes to the fireplace, picks up poker, starts to heat it, sees burnt poppet, turns to* DOLL.)

HANNAH. You burnt the poppet! Ah, now I have proof that you're a witch, proof to use in the trial against you. Hellcat! Succubus! (*She goes to* DOLL, *brandishing the poker.* MR. WENTWORTH *enters quickly right.*)

ELISHA. What is this noise? Hannah, what are you doing?

HANNAH. I have proof, Elisha, a thousand times proof, that yonder maid is a witch, and I go to brand her.

ELISHA. Stop!

HANNAH. Would you protect a murderess, Elisha?

ELISHA. You shall not touch her!

HANNAH. She has murdered Mitty Waite! The child just died and I came home with news of it to find Thomas half mad, this girl fallen, and her poppet burnt to a cinder on the hearth. Now dare to tell me she is innocent! (MR. WENTWORTH *is bending over* DOLL.)

ELISHA. Doll! Doll!

HANNAH. She is not dead. I saw her move before you came.

ELISHA (*discovering the blow of the candlestick*). She has been struck. Here is the print of a blow on her head. (*Searchingly*) Hannah, did you hurt her?

HANNAH. Nay, I did not, to my sorrow. Anne Goodnow struck that blow. She felled the bat the moment before Mitty Waite died and the child screamed and called out "Doll" with great agony. Doll's spirit was in the bat, and by the same blow she and it are fallen.

ELISHA. Hannah! (*He bends over* DOLL *again. There is a*

clatter of horses' hoofs outside and the indistinct sound of talking—about ten men's voices.)

HANNAH (*at the window*). 'Tis the sheriff! They're come to take her to Salem jail!

(DOLL *stirs in* MR. WENTWORTH'S *arms.*)

ELISHA. Doll! Doll, wake up, dear! (HANNAH *is at the back, looking and listening.* MR. WENTWORTH *lifts* DOLL *to her feet. She is very slowly regaining consciousness.*)

ELISHA. Doll, dearest, rouse yourself.

HANNAH. Aye, best rouse yourself and pray. Pray to your Devil God that he may save you from the noose on Gallows Hill. (*There is a knock at the door.* DOLL *is startled to consciousness.*)

VOICE OUTSIDE. I have a warrant for Doll Wentworth. Open! (HANNAH *starts to the door.*)

ELISHA. Do not touch that door! (DOLL *covers her face with her hands and shrinks back in terror.* MR. WENTWORTH *tries to comfort her.*)

ELISHA. God will save you, dearest. Can you pray to him? (*Again there is a knock.* DOLL *grows more terrified and with the strength of her terror lifts her hands and tries to call for help. Her lips form the words "Satan! Satan! save me!" She seems to see someone and stumbles forward to meet him. Her body stiffens as if in an embrace. Her head is bent slightly backward, her eyes are closed. She seems to receive a kiss. A calm comes over her. She smiles. Her body relaxes, her eyes slowly open.* MR. WENTWORTH *catches her in his arms as she is about to fall.*)

HANNAH (*in an awed tone*). Did you hear her? She called the Devil and he came.

ELISHA. Hush ! The child is dead. (*There is another and louder knock.*)

VOICE. Open in the name of Justice and the Law! Open! (*The knocking continues and* HANNAH *moves stealthily to the door as*

THE CURTAIN FALLS

A GROUP OF POEMS

By Vigliano Zullo

FINGER THIS EARTH

Finger this fresh, fertile earth,
  So warm and soft;
Crumble a handful of black,
  And fling it aloft.

Watch the wind whipping it wide,
  And wildly and high,
Over the plains to the ocean,
  Over hill to the sky.

To find where the farthest hath fallen,
  Where the last is low,
Like its atoms, shifty and swiftly,
  Thus shall I go;

There dig me a deep sleek bury,
  And lay me to die;
For my face I'll have roses and clover,
  For my tombstone, the sky.

WITH LOVELINESS LAIN

On a cool midnight in September,
  With stars a web overhead,
Love to forever remember
  Was born, that will never be dead.

In the shadows of shimmering leaves,
  And a leaf obscuring the moon,
Where the wind in its frolicking cleaves
  A passage with maple leaves strewn,

I wandered with my lovely woman
  Over a crackling trail,
In the silence of silver unbroken
  But for music louding the vale.

To a leaf-noisy thicket we came,
And I bared my woman so frail,
And the light of her shone like a flame—
So trembly and dusky and pale.

And the valley of music was flooded
With words that would vex a lark.
And the darkness of moonlight was studded
With two gems burning the dark.

And suddenly filling me fell
And emptiness begging of life
Mutely some potion to quell
The pain like the stab of a knife.

And hearing, my woman made straight
The core of my sadness to take,
And the balm of her bounty did sate
The gnawing throb of the ache.

And in that moment's employ,
With Love and Loveliness lain,
The song of my being was joy,—
But my woman kept trembling in pain.

CONVERSATION

Choosing a path that led we cared not where,
So long from crowded streets and sooty air
We went, we came upon a misty slope
Where meadows which the steady summer sun
Had bronzed bowed welcome to the coiling lope
Of gray September winds.
"Summer is done,
My darling, and our first trembling rose has grown
To redder bloom than blood . . . "
"Aye, summer has flown
Much faster than a wounded eagle wings
To home and death," she said; "our rose now swings
Low southward in the wind."
I said, "We pass
Into September flush and clean from rains
And winds of Summertime . . . "
(bright were her eyes)

She pointed a white finger. "That swamp grass,
Beyond the aqueducts, where the water strains
For freedom,—how beautiful it is. It sways
Like purple-helmeted crusaders massed
For battle: marching onward, strikes and flays,
Is flayed by enemy swords, retreats harassed,
Then rallies, and marches on again."
(windy hair
And sweet the smell of it.)
I said, "Our march
Will be forever onward. Come closer, sweet,
The sun of afternoon will sift this maze
And give us light revealing pastures sweet
And cool for us to revel in."
(Her voice
Was low and soft and far away.)
"Days
Will be cloudier, and then will I,
Who have no thing but sadness in my heart,
Pass through dark woods and valleys deep, sit by
A secret stream and hear the crickets start
A melody of pain . . ."
"Beloved one,
We shall have mirth and everlasting song
Whichever way we go, for we have won
A thule that none among the striving throng
Can gain . . ."
A slow obscuring look of pain
Darkened her face with beauty that beguiled
Deep thunder from the north and piercing rain,
Whereon she closed her eyes with peace, and smiled.

LONELY NIGHT

Silent the night, but whisperings come
Of things that should be:
Low laughter, and music, and murmuring trees,
And love with me.

But some long night, when crowded by life,
And tired of sleep,
I shall steal out and visit this dark,
And, remembering, weep.

I SHALL BE HOME

I shall expect you crying when you come,
And tired with the sadness of the years.
Remorse shall be upon you on that day:
Your words will be a moan of anguished tears.

I don't lament my loss of the young grace
You lavished blindly, seeking love's relief.
Let others hoard the dreams you once created:
Bring me your pain and weary gaze of grief.

I shall be home and waiting late for you,
After your play with youthful lips is done.
And I shall kiss you sadly, tearful, too—
I shall be crying sadly when you come.

VICTIM

Pale and fragile as the midnight moon
That shines with wistful splendor on the sea
So was your tilted face with beauty strewn
Baring its graces flauntingly to me.

Captive as star-gleam on an agèd crest,
Or a young comet in the web of skies,
So was I caught,—and neither could I wrest
My glance from sadness welling in your eyes.

Clear 'cross the heavens now I send my call—
With falcon's speed and message of the dove—
By lunar magic pinioned to recall
The beauty and the beauty of your love.

TO A YOUNGER BROTHER

Never hunt for treasure,
Never hoard your gold,
You will find them of no measure
When youth is old.

If you look for laughter,
If you look for mirth,
You will find enough disaster
To quit the earth.

If you've slept with beauty,
And in love have lain,
Leave before the hand of duty
Levies its pain.

Never pick a lily,
Roses never pluck,
From the street pick up a flower
Covered with muck.

L'Envoi

Heed no one, moreover,
Witless, or savant,
Rake the leaves till you uncover
What you want.

ONE THERE WAS

I'm wiser now, through years unwisely spent,—
Time when I scorned the gold for laughter, song,
Around a wine-wet table 'midst a throng
Of friends whose sole concern was merriment,
Or when, assailed by love-struck glance, I went
Into the moonlight, toiled and tarried long
With love, nor contemplated right or wrong.—
Ay, wiser now, alone and penitent.

I well remember once there was a one
Who followed me; how, with hair undone,
Unrobed, calmly she matched my wanton code
With fearless loveliness: nor did she cry
When prudently I left with no good-by
While yet the moonlight lingered on the road.

AT THE FIRST SIGN OF AUTUMN

Leave you your home
leave you your fire behind!
Say no good-bye
give not one backward glance!
Forget your streets!
Assume a mighty stance

Among the mighty mountains,
become at once aligned
With peace and strength
become at once resigned
To man and all his universe.
Oh, now get out
And loose your gyved emotions,
And then shout,
That you yourself believe,
O holy humankind!
My soul responds
my blood gives kindred answer
To the lone cry
of each solitary aster.
My heart pains with ache,
my throat with silent grief,
My eyes flush red to reflect each flushing grief,
Or shall I walk till the western sun
Lays claim
And makes of earth
A red round pyre of its sunset flame!

AUTUMN: TIME TO GO

And now the birds
Forsake
This bristling clime
For smoother winds,
and scenes untinged
With browning red,
and hills unsinged
With sunset blaze;
And now occurs
The pantomime
Of Autumn hitting hills
And sifting through
A line of maples;
And now
the sky gets fringed
With purple fusions,
and all is tinged
With sadness
Completing vagabond time.

Let not pass these things without thought's dower,
And let not memory relent its potent power
When simpler days make history of this hour.
Time now the wind provokes the fretting wanderer,
Time now the paths pull on the tired wanderer,
Time now the leaves ensnare the lonely wanderer,
Time, now, to go.

PENITENCE

But for farewell, there was no word to say.
And with a gallant smile he bowed his head
And said farewell again. And then he fled.
She hurled a farewell after him to stay
The growing ache that seemed too much to pay
For the acknowledgment that she had bled
So long before, in someone else's bed.
And then she felt she had become as clay.

That night she thought of him somewhere alone
On some wet street with only pain for cheer.
Patiently she paced the carpet floor
And prayed that God would send him back to stone
Or cripple her. And then she heard a clear
Sound, an anxious knocking on the door.

ONE OF THE TRADE

What courage does this ageing lady show
  Against the toll of time and age and things
That make the journey rougher and more slow
  That once was swift and smooth with joyful blessings
Of brave heart, proud head, stout body, and the glow
  Of cleanliness that virgin beauty brings
With its one bubbling mold. What pity no
  Remembrance to her radiant girlhood clings.

Yet for some woman's reason she still flings
  Coquettish glances to any lad whose purse
Betrays a day's hard labor; and when she swings
  Her hips from here to kingdom come the curse
With which she answers to no business rings
  Carillon-like throughout the universe.

TO A VIRGIN

If for caprice and for the little time
It takes a sunset to relieve the heart
Of all those burdens and the clogging grime
Oppressing it, you let a brave upstart
Through varied use of syllable and rhyme
Persuade you to indulge a minor part
Of virtues whose virgin guile make him sublime,
Whether it be by artifice or art,

Remember the bewitchment shall entail
Such punishment as only martyrs tell
Of sacrifice; and if it should prevail,
Remember, too, that it may be the knell
Of wariness whose passing will avail
You half of heaven, half the way to hell!

NOT FOR THE FLESH

Not for your breasts, not for your lips alone,
Not for your body heaving like the sea
Beneath me, not for the vice encircling me
Fiercely in one brief desperate clinging thrown
Like a wind's fury, and neither for your own
Avowals of your love do I love thee.
But for the sharp supernal ecstasy
Of being to immortal matter grown.

Before there was your quivering love to take
A swifter call assailed me that no smell
Of flesh, nor the wild startled furtive gleam
Your eyes flashed once could it confound or break . . .
And through you, loving you, thereby I dwell
Not with the cloying dust, but with a dream.

"STILL IT IS SPRING"

A Tragedy in One Act

By Sree Basudeb

To Kiki

Characters

Manik, *a peasant*
Pande, *a neighbour*
Lila, *a schoolgirl*
Ram Ratan, *a young Nationalist*
Fazlu, *another neighbour*
Mrs. Dasi, *another neighbour*
Policemen, A Goat, *etc.*

Bolpur, a village in Bengal. A thatched cottage with a long yard. A large door opens to the yard. Trees, flowers, and vines can be seen. A river surrounds the scene. Manik *is busy with a spinning wheel. He wears glasses. An elderly man. It is Spring.*

Manik (*aside*). The soft, cool air flows so gently and touches my gray hair, that I feel I must have done some great deeds of virtue to deserve these days in my old age. (*A knock at the door.*) Come in, come in. (*Enter* Pande.)

Pande. I bow to you, Manik, and may Krisna bless you.

Manik. Krisna's blessings on you, too; come in, come in. Take a seat. Make yourself comfortable. Partake of my food and milk. This little hovel is yours. Make yourself at home.

Pande. Thank you, brother, thank you. My need is little. I am getting so old.

Manik. Yes, yes. Age creeps on in spite of ourselves . . . but it is Spring, Pande, Spring. The trees are blossoming and the birds are singing and the rivers are laughing, Pande.

Pande. Last night my lumbago bothered me so much that I thought I would be far better off dead than alive. I rubbed a pint of snake oil on my limbs and some red pepper, too, but it seems nothing does me any good any more. I am getting old, Manik, old.

MANIK. Yes, yes, old; but you will feel better; you will feel better. Yesterday the old cat brought in a young birdling, and, Pande, I gave it a little pea flour ball, and fed it until it became strong. I felt its little heart beat between my fingers and thanked my Lord Krisna for the little life he had given it. Oh, Pande, life is wonderful, wonderful!

PANDE. It seems my lumbago moves up and down all over my body, and damn it, if I rub in one place, it aches in another. It seems I cannot locate it any more. Look at my fingers, how swollen they are. Even the joints are stiff, and I drink two pints of goat's milk a day, but that doesn't seem to do any good either.

MANIK. Pray, brother. Pray to Krisna, and keep on laughing, and be joyful. It is all in the mind.

PANDE. Mind, you say, Manik, mind? I have so much pain lately that I think there is no such thing as mind but only lumbago. The afternoon before yesterday's sunrise, I walked two and a half miles to see a medicine man. They say he is a wonder. And he gave me this little root of a rare tree from the Himalaya Mountains and asked me to put it in a little locket and hang it about my person. It seems it did a little good for a couple of hours; but I don't know, things seem to be just the same. The days drag heavily. I will be glad when it is all over.

MANIK. Cheer up, brother, cheer up. Don't you see it is Spring. New life is springing up everywhere. The sky is clear. The water is cool. And the merry birds are singing from the blossoming trees. Cheer up, brother, cheer up.

PANDE. Oh, as luck would have it, I broke my stick. Now I cannot find any young fellow to cut a bamboo for me and make another. The little savings I have I cannot spend lavishly on bamboo sticks.

MANIK. Take mine, brother, take mine.

PANDE. And what will you do without one, Manik?

MANIK. Oh, I don't need a bamboo stick in the Spring. I will go about as a new life. You see, Pande, it is Spring. (*Someone is heard rapping on the door.*) Come in, come in. It is Spring. (*Enter* LILA, *a little schoolgirl, in rags.*)

LILA (*crying*). My father bought me a little glass doll from Germany and my brother broke it. Look at it. I cannot mend it any more.

MANIK. Krisna bless your little heart, honey. Bring it to me. My feeble, old hands may be of some service to the broken doll. Go in the other room. I made some flour paste to mend

my mirror the other day. On the top of the wooden chest you will find it. In a brass cup. Fetch it here. Fetch it here. (*The girl brings the brass cùp.*)

LILA. Is this it, Manik? It stinks.

MANIK. I will put a little camphor in it. Then it will smell as fresh as the Spring air. Don't you mind the odor, honey. Wipe your little tears and smile. Don't you see, honey, it is Spring outside. The mango trees are blossoming, and the bakul trees are heavy with tiny flowers, and the swarms of bees are singing their hymns of prayer over honey-laden flowers. Smile, honey, smile, don't you cry.

LILA. But my brother broke my doll.

MANIK. You are a doll, sweet. You are a doll yourself. You don't need a glass doll. Go and stand before a mirror and look at yourself and you will see the real doll.

LILA. But I'm not like the German doll. My doll smelled so sweet—

MANIK. Stroll out in the yard and break a tuft of sephali blossom and put it in your black hair. Then you will understand that it is Spring. It is Spring, honey. (*The girl goes out in the yard.*)

VOICE OF LILA. Manik, a stray goat is eating up all your spinach.

MANIK. Ah, let it eat, let it eat. It is Spring. I will buy some spinach from the market. Don't you hit the goat, honey. Don't you hit the goat.

PANDE. I had better go. I have to go about half a mile to get a little opium. My box is empty.

MANIK. Don't take so much opium. The dope makes you ache more, Pande.

PANDE. Ah, you don't know. What should I do without opium? Had it not been for opium I would have been dead long ago. Krisna be with you, brother, Krisna be with you. I will see you some other time.

MANIK. Blessings of Krisna to you and yours, brother. Come and see me again. (*Exit* PANDE.)

VOICE OF LILA. Manik, you have got lots of bugs on your flowers.

MANIK. Yes, yes. The red ones and the yellow ones and the green ones. They are playing with my flowers. Let them play. They harm nobody. They are like playmates of my flowers.

VOICE OF LILA. Some of these bugs stink.

MANIK. Pick up a flower and smell it. Don't go on smelling stinks all your life, you little one. (*The goat makes its way into the hovel.*) Ha, ha, ha, you little rascal, come here. (*He goes into the kitchen and brings out a bunch of spinach and gives it to the goat.*) There, eat these, too. I don't need them anyhow. You little rascal; it is Spring. Don't you know it is Spring? (*A hard knock is heard on the door.*) Not so hard, brother. Not so hard. Come in, whoever you are. You are welcome. (*Enter* FAZLU, *a Moslem.*)

MANIK. So it is you, Fazlu. Allah be with you, Fazlu. Allah be with you.

FAZLU. Allah be with you, Manik. But have you seen my goat anywhere? Why, there it is . . . You son of a pig! You stole my goat!

MANIK. I didn't steal it, brother. I didn't steal it. I am just having a little fun with it.

FAZLU (*angrily*). Yes, and I am going to tell the police about it, and then see how much fun you have in the Police Station.

MANIK. No, no, you wouldn't do that to me, Fazlu. You know I wouldn't steal a thing. He just walked up and I gave him some spinach.

FAZLU. Hm, hm. You are trying to lure my goat with some spinach. That will be nice evidence in Court, you will see. (*Takes the goat and walks out.*)

MANIK. Ah, you won't complain against me. I am an old man. Besides, it is Spring, Fazlu. It is Spring. Everybody is happy.

FAZLU. You would be better off in a jail than in this shack, anyhow. (*Exit. In rushes* RAM RATAN, *a young student.*)

RAM RATAN (*breathlessly*). Manik, thank Krisna, you are in. The police are after me.

MANIK (*hastily*). Why, what have you done, you young rascal?

RAM RATAN. Hide these at once. (*Gives a bundle to* MANIK.)

MANIK. What's this?

RAM RATAN. Some seditious literature. We are distributing these pamphlets everywhere and the police got after me.

MANIK. Did they see you come this way?

RAM RATAN. No, I ran through the woods and they lost track of me.

MANIK. Very well. Go to the kitchen, and stand on a stool, and hide these on the bamboo shelf and put some books on top, so nobody will suspect. (*The student follows the instructions.*)

MANIK. Don't fall down, youngster. Don't fall down. My stool is a little shaky. When I get around to it I shall repair it.

RAM RATAN. I won't. I have hidden it well. They won't find it.

MANIK. All right; fetch some milk; come and sit here and drink it. (*The student returns with a bowl of milk. They both drink.*)

MANIK. Now, tell me all about it.

RAM RATAN (*with interest*). That bundle contains printed formulae of how to make bombs, and we have printed them secretly in a press hidden in the woods.

MANIK. Good Lord! How many of you youngsters are concerned in it?

RAM RATAN. Oh, we have over two thousand students in different parts of the country. It is a gigantic organization, nation-wide. You know we are manufacturing bombs ourselves and pretty soon we will blow up bridges, derail trains, and kill all the magistrates and police officers.

MANIK. Holy Ram! Holy Ram! Whoever has put this killing idea into your head? Don't forget that an Englishman, too, is Krisna's creature. They have fathers and mothers and brothers and sisters whom they have left behind them in England. They have little babies at home.

RAM RATAN (*interrupting*). They don't think of that when they insult us and rob us and kill us.

MANIK. No one must hurt another. If they make mistakes in ruling us it is because they do not understand us thoroughly. You see, we are foreigners to them. They do not understand our language or customs, our religion or mode of living; and, my dear boy, do not forget that our own policemen hurt us worse than the English.

RAM RATAN. I know you are a reactionary. All peasants are ignorant. They support the British rule in India. Some day we will have a revolution here and take care of the ignorant peasants as they did in Russia.

MANIK. May Krisna give you good judgment, my son.

May Krisna bless you. One cannot take away human sufferings with the teaching of demons. It is Maya. It is not the law of Nature that men should hate and despise and loathe and kill and destroy. The true man conquers everything, everybody by love. Conquers hate through love. You, youngsters, instead of diffusing these pamphlets among the poor ignorant people, teaching them how to kill, if you distributed the teachings of Gita, you would do more good to your own country. But I suppose it doesn't appeal to the young blood.

RAM RATAN. Don't talk nonsense, old man. England doesn't understand your high philosophy. She understands killing. Why, here in my pocket I have a cutting from an American paper, where a great writer says that India will never get her freedom unless she learns to fight. I suppose you know far more than this great writer.

MANIK. No writer can be great if he preaches killing as the remedy of human misery. Love, my son, love is the only weapon by which we will conquer human hearts. Yes, even iron hearts.

RAM RATAN. Yes, love conquer an Englishman's heart? An Englishman's heart? What a stupid idea!

MANIK. Love will conquer a tiger's heart, to say nothing of an Englishman's. An Englishman is human. He has a wife and children at home. He does not want to tyrannize. If you go to him and talk to him nicely, he will understand. (*A great noise is heard outside.*)

RAM RATAN. It is the police. Where shall I hide?

MANIK. Get out in the yard. Hide in the woods. (RAM RATAN *runs out. A hard knock at the door.*)

VOICE. Open the door! Open the door, you son of a pig!

MANIK. Come in, brother, come in. Don't be angry with me, whoever you are. (*Enter* FAZLU *with two native policemen.*)

FAZLU (*pointing to* MANIK). That is the son of a pig that stole my goat.

FIRST POLICEMAN. Ha, ha. A sneak thief disguised as an old beggar.

SECOND POLICEMAN. You were getting ready to sell it, eh?

FIRST POLICEMAN (*giving* MANIK *a slap on the head*). Come up to the police station, you dog.

SECOND POLICEMAN (*spitting on* MANIK). You cur! You have no fear of the hereafter. You stole this nice man's goat.

MANIK (*with folded palms*). Please, sir police sahibs, I did not steal his goat, I swear. The little girl that is playing in the

yard found it eating up my spinach. Then it walked into my room.

FIRST POLICEMAN. Very well, call the girl.

MANIK (*calling*). Lila, Lila, come here.

LILA (*running*). What do you want, Manik?

MANIK. Where was the goat, honey? Tell these authorities.

LILA. Why, that goat was eating up all your spinach. I was going to hit it but you would not let me. And he stinks so!

FIRST POLICE. Ha. Then you lured it into the room.

MANIK. Just a second. Just a second. (*He goes into the other room and returns with a rupee which he gives to the first policeman.*) Here is a rupee for your trouble, sirs. You see, I didn't steal the goat.

SECOND POLICEMAN. I knew it all the time. You are an honest man.

(*To* FAZLU). Come on, you hound, you should not accuse an honest man like this for nothing. (*Slaps* FAZLU *smartly on the cheek. Exit two policemen.*)

FAZLU. So you bribed the policemen, did you?

MANIK. Ah, let us laugh and forget our troubles. Don't you see it is Spring, Fazlu? Don't you see everybody is happy and everything is bright? Even your goat was happy with me. You are always suspicious. Why are you like that, Fazlu?

FAZLU. Allah have mercy on your vegetables. See what happens to them tonight. (*Exit angrily.*)

MANIK. You wouldn't destroy my vegetables! No, no! That is all I have to live on the year round. (*Aside*). Krisna's will shall be done.

LILA. What happened? Why did you give money to the policemen? Why didn't you give it to me? I would have bought some sweetmeats.

MANIK. Here are two annas. Go and fetch some sweetmeats. We will enjoy them. It is springtime, honey.

LILA. Thank you, I will bring some nice sweetmeats. (LILA *runs out.* RAM RATAN *enters stealthily through the yard door.*)

RAM RATAN. Are they gone, Manik? Were they looking for me?

MANIK. No, no, my boy. Come in, come in. They were here just for a little social call. They are all right.

RAM RATAN. Why, Manik, you are crying.

MANIK (*wiping his tears*). I am overjoyed with all the bounties Lord Krisna has given me. Nice neighbours, nice friends; lots of vegetables in the garden, and Spring is all around me. Ah, just feel this air. It is so refreshing, full of perfumes from wild flowers. I thank my Lord that I am living.

RAM RATAN. You would not feel like that if you had to rot in jail as some of our leaders are doing.

MANIK. Karma, my son, Karma; not a good deed goes unrewarded in this world; not a good thought goes unnoticed in His judgment! No good man ever suffers in this world.

RAM RATAN. You call our great leaders, bad men; our great patriots, bad men?

MANIK. Not bad men, my son, but perhaps mistaken ones. If your leaders are preaching killing and destroying, as you youngsters have learned today, they are mistaken leaders, I am sure. There is only One leader and He is in Heaven and He destroys no life, however small it may be.

RAM RATAN. You are just ignorant, dumb, that's all. You know, in evolution the greater life lives on the smaller lives. Wherever there is creation, there is destruction. Wherever there is evolution, there is revolution. You cannot build without destroying.

MANIK. That isn't destroying, my son. That is merely changing. Hot blooded youngsters like you will never understand the scheme of the Master. He is merciful, and He only arranges and rearranges things. There is no death nor destruction in Nature; only change of forms.

RAM RATAN. You bet there are changes of form; and our tyrant Englishmen will change their forms, too. That is exactly what we are planning.

MANIK. My son, when you are as old as I, and look at things as I do, you will understand that this world has been long planned out by some divine Master, and no man, however great and strong, can ever change an iota of it. What will be will be, and man fights in vain.

RAM RATAN. Never mind about that philosophy. I have to get away from here or the police will catch me.

MANIK. Where do you want to go? You have neither money nor friends anywhere.

RAM RATAN. If I can get away to the big city which will cost me only five rupees, I have some friends there who will take care of me. They belong to our party.

MANIK. Are you sure of it? And are you sure that you won't get caught in the station?

RAM RATAN. Well, if I don't take that bundle with me, and if you send it by parcel post to me later on, I think things would be reasonably safe.

MANIK. Well, I don't know, my son, His will will be done. I have very little money left, but I suppose I can give you five rupees which leaves me very little to live on until I can sell my grain. (*Retires to the kitchen and returns with six rupees which he gives to* RAM RATAN.) Here is an extra rupee with which you can get some food. Be careful, my son; and I have only one request to make of you.

RAM RATAN. Thank you. Yes, what is it?

MANIK. Do whatever you like, my boy, but wherever you are—always—in distress, in joy or sorrow—always—close your little eyes and thank the Maker, and have faith in Him and ask for His divine guidance. May Krisna bless you. (*A piece of plaster which becomes dislodged falls from the ceiling directly on* MANIK'S *head.* MANIK *stutters momentarily, then recovers.*) Thy will will be done, O Lord!

RAM RATAN. Are you much hurt? Are you hurt? Manik?

MANIK. No, no, no, no. Nothing can hurt me. You had better run along now, youngster.

RAM RATAN. Very well, I am leaving. (*Exit* RAM RATAN. MANIK *sits down and spins while a bird sings on a nearby tree.*)

MANIK (*aside, dreamily*). Sing on, little bird, your song of the springtime. You know no human sorrow, want, or malice. Your need is small and your world is wide. The sky is your dream and the fields are your pastures. You hope but little, so you know no despair. Your little wings soar over the perfumed air of the Spring and your little heart flutters with the songs in the air. Sometimes circling round and round the folds of golden clouds you perhaps dream some of my very own dreams; who knows! Who knows what you were in your last incarnation? Perhaps you were just a little fluttering dream in the frail clouds of a sunset sky. (*The bird perches upon the window-sill and twitters.*) What do you say in your tiny voice, little one? Perhaps you are telling me some rosy tales of a far off land where people do not suffer or cry. Perhaps you are trying to tell something of somewhere that no one has ever seen but to which your little wings have only to flit to find real happiness. Or, perhaps, you are just dreaming some childish bird dreams as I often did in my

boyhood days . . . wait a moment, I'll give you some grain to peck. (*Goes and returns with some grain for the bird which he places before it very gently.*) Don't be frightened of me, you little wisp of a song. Eat my little grain and then fly away to your native tree. I will not catch you and place you in a cage. Don't be frightened. (*The bird flies upon his shoulder and eats from his hand.*) Here you are, tiny one. You seem to be very tame. Eat heartily, so that you can sing more. (*The bird makes dirt on his hand and flies away.*) You naughty thing, now I must wash my hand. (*A knock is heard on the door.*)

MANIK. Come in, neighbour, come in. (*He goes to was his hand. Enter* MRS. DASI *timidly.*)

MRS. DASI. Are you in, neighbour? I am not botherin you, I hope.

MANIK. Not at all. Not at all. Why . . . I consider it my good fortune that you came to give me the dust of your feet. Is it not a wonderful day of our Lord!

MRS. DASI. Lovely. Lovely. If only my son Kanai felt a little better—

MANIK. He must. He must feel better. Why . . . it is Spring. New life, new hope, new dreams are everywhere.

MRS. DASI. Bless you, neighbour, the way you cheer us up. Had it not been for your occasional encouragement I could not have gone on. This morning I go to the salt bowl and find it empty . . . and it is so far to walk to the store—

MANIK. Well, well . . . take a cupful from my bowl. I have a bagful . . . the Lord is so kind to me. I have salt and spices and everything—

MRS. DASI. I may need a few pieces of tumeric—

MANIK. Take a handful. Take enough. Last year, it seems, I planted a whole gardenful of tumeric. Nothing but tumeric. I have so much of it.

MRS. DASI. I don't know what to do with Kanai. I have given him Tulsi leaf juice every day. I have given so much fomentation with cow water but his spleen gets larger and larger. If I had money I could get the big doctor down from the city. They say he is a wonder.

MANIK. How much does it cost to call the big doctor, Mrs. Dasi? It may be we could scrape it up.

MRS. DASI. They say his fees are twenty rupees and five rupees carfare. Twenty-five in all.

MANIK. Twenty-five rupees. Well . . . well . . .

let me see . . . I know. I have it. In a couple of days a man is coming to buy one of my bullocks—

MRS. DASI. Holy Krisna—no! Not that! How could you get along with one bullock? You cannot till the soil without a pair—

MANIK. Well, one bullock can pull the plow just as well. Perhaps a little slow . . . but I am not in a hurry when I work in the fields—

MRS. DASI. No, I can not let you make such sacrifices for me. You are so kind. May Krisna bless you.

MANIK. That is it, sister. Krisna's blessings are all I need. We should pray and have faith in Him. Mrs. Dasi, if we could have implicit faith in Him, then all our troubles would be over.

MRS. DASI. That is true. Very true. Yet, we ought to do all we can to help ourselves.

MANIK. It will be a few days before we can get the big doctor. In the meantime let us pray for His mercy.

MRS. DASI. Yes, yes . . . I have left my darling alone. I must hurry. Did you say I could get a cupful of salt?

MANIK. Go right there in the kitchen, Mrs. Dasi—you will find the salt bowl. (MRS. DASI *does so.*)

VOICE OF MRS. DASI. Holy Ram! Your bowl is empty. There is not a pinch there—

MANIK. Well, well! I forgot to fill it. Take some from the bag on the floor, right there.

VOICE OF MRS. DASI. You mean this bag? Good Lord, there is a hole in it as big as my fist. Your salt has gone down a rathole. The bag is empty. (*Coming out.*) Mr. Manik, you need a wife to look after you.

MANIK. Yes, yes. But wait. Lila will be back in the twinkle of an eye. I will send her out to get some.

MRS. DASI. Oh, don't bother. I can run to the store myself.

MANIK. You sit right down and rest your weary bones a bit. The youngster enjoys going to the shop.

MRS. DASI. Well, if you insist—Now, tell me why you have never married. You need a wife.

MANIK. It may be I do. But who will ever have an old man? Ha! Ha!

MRS. DASI. You were not always old . . . We have always wondered about it. Is there a reason—?

MANIK. Ah, Mrs. Dasi—

MRS. DASI. Well, if it is a secret—

MANIK. No secret at all. Only I thought you would not care to hear it—

MRS. DASI. You know we are like a brother and a sister. I have known you ever since—

MANIK. Yes . . . yes . . . you see . . . you see . . . when I was a boy, just a youngster, I ran away from home and roved about the world like a gypsy.

MRS. DASI. So I have heard.

MANIK. Going from place to place, wandering, with no aim in life. Until I came to the vicinity of the Persian gulf—

MRS. DASI. Persian gulf! That far!

MANIK. There I met the divers. The divers who dive for pearls. It is a wonderful life, Mrs. Dasi. The first pearl one finds belongs to himself and the others he finds during the balance of the year belong to the employer, or pearl merchant. The diver sells his pearl or pearls to his employer, and gets a good price.

MRS. DASI. How interesting!

MANIK. I learned to dive, too. I got pearls. A bunch of them, the very first day of the year. I sold one and saved the rest.

MRS. DASI. Well, well . . . and what did you do with them?

MANIK. There were four or five Moors among us. One, a white Moor from Morocco.

MRS. DASI. A white Moor! I thought all Moors were black.

MANIK. There are white Moors. They are Spaniards or Arabs. Although most of the Moors are black. Well, this white Moor was a widower and he had a very young daughter with him. She had no mother, no home; she travelled with her father. She was very tiny, very young and—and very pretty, Mrs. Dasi—

MRS. DASI. I see. I see. But she was a Mussulman girl!

MANIK. I did not know much about religion in those days. I was just a child myself, about fourteen or fifteen—and, you know—

MRS. DASI. I understand.

MANIK. You know, Mrs. Dasi, the old man took a liking to me, and I stayed in their little cave—

MRS. DASI. Cave! You stayed with them! Did they eat beef? Ram! Ram! Holy Ram!

MANIK. They lived on fish and vegetables. I was the cook. They knew my religion forbade me to let them touch my food—

MRS. DASI (*with a sigh of relief*). Oh—!

MANIK. Oh, I knew my religion, well enough—

MRS. DASI. And, besides, you have done your penance since and bathed in the Ganges and pleased the Brahmans—

MANIK. Yes . . . yes . . . but as I was saying . . . in spite of the fact that I was a Hindu and they were Moslems, we became like one family. You know, it was so lonely there—

MRS. DASI. I can imagine. Sins committed in foreign lands and in youth—I understand—

MANIK. One day the old man dived once too often and never came up.

MRS. DASI. Good Krisna—!

MANIK. The responsibility of the tiny girl, and she was only eleven years old, fell on me . . . I became her father, brother, mother—

MRS. DASI. The poor thing. It was good of you!

MANIK. Day after day . . . week after week . . . month after month . . . year after year . . . I saw her, helped her, guided her, coached her, educated her into a blooming flower . . . a rare beauty—like a Damask Ivory Princess in rags, Mrs. Dasi!

MRS. DASI. Well! Well!

MANIK. I was told that her mother was a pure Castilian—a blue blooded Spanish aristocrat—something like one of our Ranees—

MRS. DASI. Oh—!

MANIK. It was in her blood. Brought up in that abject poverty, she was gentle, noble like a queen girl!

MRS. DASI. How strange!

MANIK. With every sunrise I saw her growing—unfolding page after page, the history of a young woman . . . blooming like an exquisite, exotic lotus in a foreign garden—

MRS. DASI. She must have been sweet—

MANIK. Ethereal! Only had one looked at her with the eyes of a boy . . . one would have seen a floral wreath swayed into life . . . for when she walked, Mrs. Dasi, it seemed the loveliness of a pale heaven had come down on earth for a little while—

MRS. DASI. She must have been lovely—

MANIK. And when she laughed, Mrs. Dasi, it was the cooing of pigeons. If ever she was a little angry, it was the eclipse of the sunlight, or the languishing of a forest of flowers. When she smiled, Mrs. Dasi, it was a summer's bridal rose-dawn on the Persian sea. When she wept—the heaven grew into a haze with a mist of rain.

MRS. DASI. She was so beautiful—

MANIK. I had bought with my meagre boyhood savings a Cashmere sadi from a Kabul peddler. It was of Basanti colour with black satin border. When she draped herself in it, and her black hair foamed over it—I used to steal away from her to gather henna for her feet, and sea shells for her play house. I used to wake up at night to think up brave Arabian tales to amaze her and surprise her. How often I had watched the half moon on her blushing toes, and caressed her swan-like throat with tall Persian roses. I stole pomegranates from rich men's gardens to see her press the seeds between her fingers, while I watched her teeth. I called her Peach Blossom, for she was of flame and of the morning's white laughing twilight; and I said her name in my vesper prayer every night, half afraid she would be stolen away from me in a dream.

MRS. DASI. And to think she was a Spaniard!

MANIK. To look at her one would have thought she was born of a twin coloured dream—a little of night, that was her hair; and her face, the subdued sunrise on the sea. She was fragile as an infant ivy, slender as a reed; but as she walked one thought of ripples. She was supple as her sadi. Those laughing eyes of hers looked far, at times, for the sails on the bosom of the sea. Then she would look like a myth, that would anon vanish, and I would cry to the ocean in vain!

MRS. DASI. How long were you together?

MANIK. Tremulous nights of emerald rain of the Persian sea found us together in a marbled cave on the shore; and I had seen her fairy head droop in sleep on the pillow of owl feathers I had made for her. Many a night I had told her tales of the desert Peris, while her eyes were closed like lotus petals in half sleep. At morning, I brought her pomegranates and pears and nuts and milk and honey. I waited on tiptoe for the magic moment of her awakening. Then I would laugh like a child and echoes of my mirth would burst forth on the neighbouring rocks and rivers.

MRS. DASI. What did the divers think of you two?

MANIK. Her innocent eyes could tame even the ferocity of a leopard! She played with the hearts of men. They would go to the mountain tops and bring her nameless flowers . . . and one day I caught a blue mud wasp and cut its tail into a tiny disc. She made a mole of it for her cheek . . . that day I kissed the hem of her veil! I thought she was not of this world.

VOICE OF LILA (*loudly and from afar*). Here I come, Uncle Manik! I have got three sandesh—

MRS. DASI. Some other time I must hear the rest of it.

MANIK. Yes, yes . . . the youngster is coming . . . (*Enter* LILA.)

LILA (*breathlessly, to* MRS. DASI). Oh, hello! I only got three sandesh. Not enough for all three of us.

MRS. DASI. Bless you, honey, you two eat.

LILA. No, I have got one for every one of us. I got three. See.

MANIK. You eat them all, honey, and drink a little milk. Then get us some salt from the store.

LILA. Oh, I just came from the store . . . my feet hurt. I have been running errands all day in the hot sun.

MRS. DASI. Never mind, neighbour, I will just run along. I will get a boy to go to the store.

MANIK. Oh, no. No. You stay right here. Lila will go. She is a darling.

LILA. All right. Please give me the money.

MANIK. Here is an anna. Please eat first . . .

LILA. No, I will bring the salt first . . . (*Runs out.*)

MANIK. Ah, these children!

MRS. DASI. Oh, tell me more about your Spanish girl—

MANIK. There is not much to tell, Mrs. Dasi . . . it seems . . . it seems . . . as I talk to you of her . . . I forget that I am old. I forget I am here. Some impalpable thing carries me on to the shores of the deep vault of waters, blue as her eyes and fathomless as my memory. Mrs. Dasi, I dare not think back as I recall that fatal evening.

MRS. DASI. Oh, what happened!

MANIK. She had a little boat, and she used to go out on the gulf all alone! And stay away for long at a time! I had warned her against it.

MRS. DASI. Oh!

MANIK. One night, she went out and as I stood on the shore, watching her little boat take her away from me into the fading

mist hovering over the water . . . That night, Mrs. Dasi, the sobs of rain had cried over the tree-tops and the clouds had moaned and groaned, and I had stood on the shore, looking far across the sea, with only strangled prayers on my lips till the grey, rain-laden dawn . . .

MRS. DASI. And didn't she come back?

MANIK. Deep down into the cold bosom of the darkling sea, the queen of pearls went to reign over the unsated wild. There she belonged, and there alone her tumultuous soul rested among things that are deep and beyond . . I didn't grieve, Mrs. Dasi, for tears would beguile her fragile smile. I only went from cave to cave asking for my Peach Blossom, but only a blank stared me in the face.

MRS. DASI. How sad, how sad!

MANIK. It is not sad, Mrs. Dasi, for every Spring, just like this morning, she comes with the laughing breeze from amidst the treetops, and says things in her inaudible, floral syllables, that speak of a world of wind-tossed flowers, where she is waiting. In every chirping of the spring-birds, I hear the lilt of her voice, and on every petal of a flower I feel the romance of her smile. When the grass grows green beneath, I walk in an unbearable ecstasy toward her impalpable loveliness; and in my bosom I feel a throb of her being, unspeakably entangled with my very existence like an ivy with a tree. Mrs. Dasi, as I work on this spinning-wheel I build an interlaced castle for my dream princess, and plan and replan an undreamt kingdom for her wild play. No one understands, Mrs. Dasi, that I have never lost her. I have lost her only to regain her forever, where Death cannot approach her enwreathed, lilied form.

MRS. DASI. Ah, it is so sweet to have such a faith. You know, Mr. Manik, sometimes I feel if my little boy were taken away from me, I would feel the same way about him. Somehow, I do not believe that Death can end it all.

MANIK. No, no, Mrs. Dasi, Death is only a beginning of a life, beyond life. A life that no longer strives, wins or loses, but goes on and on through folds of mystery unto completion and fulfilment. A life that is no longer cankered by hopes or despairs, but is radiant and vibrant with the joy of eternal light. A life that is too ephemeral for the eyes of man, too illusive for his senses: nevertheless a life—that is, that must be, ever-existent in the spirit of the universe.

MRS. DASI. You speak as though you had heard the Sacred Sastras—

MANIK More than that, Mrs. Dasi. Somehow, as though in my sleep, I have gone out into the realm of that life and shared a glimpse of that aerial bliss. It is something that you cannot hold in your palm and realize with your hungry senses; but nevertheless you live it with all the joys of living. It is an existence, Mrs. Dasi. I have lived it. I have lived it a thousand times. Only when I awaken, in vain do I try to bring back a part of that indescribable experience into the waking life. But I can not. I can not, Mrs. Dasi.

MRS. DASI. Yet, it is a great solace to know that we go on living even after our death.

MANIK. Not death, Mrs. Dasi, but just a transition. The veil. Just a mist between this and the next step; and it seems we all are afraid of this step—(*Hard knock at the door. Enter three native policemen with lathis in their hands. Also,* RAM RATAN, *handcuffed.*)

MANIK. Welcome, welcome, officers!

FIRST OFFICER (*pushing* MANIK *back*). Out of my way, swine.

SECOND OFFICER (*giving him a slap*). Interfering with the law, eh?

THIRD OFFICER (*To* RAM RATAN, *shaking him*). Come on, you scum, show me where you have hidden those papers. (*The third officer and* RAM RATAN *enter the kitchen and bring out the bundle of literature hidden there. The first officer opening the bundle, looks at the papers but cannot read. He gives it to the second officer who holds the papers upside down, looks at it for awhile, then gives it to the third officer.*)

THIRD OFFICER (*to* MANIK). Now, read what it is all about, you swine!

MANIK (*taking the paper*). Yes sir, yes sir. (*Reading*) These are all religious leaflets. They tell us all about the life of Krisna.

FIRST OFFICER (*snatching away the papers from* MANIK'S *hand*). Ah, a lot of trash! A lot of humbug! (*Throws and scatters them all over the room.*)

SECOND OFFICER. Now, let us look for the guns and bombs.

MANIK. Sir policeman, we have no guns nor bombs hidden here.

SECOND OFFICER (*kicking* MANIK). Get out, you dog, you liar; we know you are conspiring to overthrow His Majesty the King! You are all under arrest.

MRS. DASI (*trembling*). Not me, sir policeman, I do not know what it is all about.

FIRST POLICEMAN. All right, get out, you hag, if you don't know anything about it. (MRS. DASI *runs out as the first officer hits her on the head. The other two officers search the two rooms, dropping and destroying everything they lay hands on.*)

MANIK. Please, officers, please do not destroy my things. I have never harmed anyone.

FIRST OFFICER (*giving* MANIK *a severe slap on the cheek*). No, you haven't conspired against His Majesty, have you? (MANIK'S *spectacles fall and are broken.*)

MANIK. Oh, officer, I cannot see without them! I cannot do without them! I am blind! They cost me twenty-three rupees and I have no money to replace them! What shall I do!

RAM RATAN. You officers should not torture the old man. He doesn't know anything about it.

SECOND OFFICER (*kicking* RAM RATAN). He doesn't, eh! Wait till we catch him with the goods!

RAM RATAN. We have no guns or bombs here, I tell you. I am only a propagandist, and I do not belong to our Bomb Squad, so you are wasting your time in this house.

SECOND OFFICER (*kicking* RAM RATAN *again*). All right, you dog, let's go. We'll go to the police station and search for your bomb factory in the town. (*Exit holding* RAM RATAN *by the neck.* MANIK *walks like a blind man; picks up and rearranges things.*)

MANIK (*aside, weeping*). Sometimes I feel Thou art so unkind to me . . . but I suppose the bigger the tree is, the heavier the storm comes down upon its head . . . I think Thou art welding and casting me through the fires of torture and pain to see if I forget Thee. (*Laughs.*) Ah, but I know, I know . . . I cannot be fooled. For a moment, I thought life was too unkind to me! (*Looking out, facing the yard*) But it is Spring . . . It is Spring . . . The infinite light, encircling, flooding the earth. Wafts of perfumed air are bringing Thy message to me. Oceans of flowers are smiling up to Thee and the green earth is gay, heaving in mirth, in Thy glory! And a million birds are singing Thy joyful odes from their tiny throats. Yonder a bird sings!

Sing on, little bird. Sing your glorious song of love, and drown man's hate, because– because—it is Spring, it is Spring—in spite of everything, it is Spring . . . Ah—

CURTAIN

TWO PAPERS A DAY

By Lewis Colwell

Shrivelled and dingy—quite alone she sat—
Alone and quite forgotten while the rest
Of withered ladies—one might call them that—
Thought she was the schooled fledgling of that nest.
The others laughed their raucous mirthless laugh,
And when she shrank they drifted one by one
Where they could savour undisturbed their chaff;
And always she was left alone—alone.
Then on a day Fate tossed her way a chance:
The kindly soul who wrapped her crackers lent her
A copy of the news—he'd gotten in advance,
And with it in her hand they saw her enter.
"A paper! Could she read them what it said?"
Like wand of wizard was this crumpled sheet.
She who had known but scorn was now a queen,
Her dingy court crowded about her feet,
Eager to catch each word—hungry they lean.
She leads them out into a larger world—
Onward they march with red-robed cardinals
To some High Mass in Rome, or see flags, furled
Over some pride-diminished citadels,
They thrill with some wild skipper of the skies,
Or some gay bark that tastes the salty spray,
They take their part in some mad enterprise,
And fight with all the eager mob their way.

Out to the throbbing world she takes the band
Of shrivelled human things whose days are mean—
She who was wan and withered, with this wand—
Her crumpled sheet—has turned into a queen.
And she must stay a queen—but how?—but how?
Never must she return to those drab hours
When she was scorned and lonely—her high prow
Must ride the spray of her discovered powers.

Better than food, this place—this eminence—
What could outweigh this chance to be a queen,

And with a little less she could commence
To satisfy her hunger—to grow lean
Was nothing to be reckoned of account
With all the rapture of the hours of sway
When she upon her little throne would mount
To read the news. And soon 'twas two a day,
The papers that she brought. Then from the stand:
"She must be very rich," the murmur drifted.
They knew not, saw not how her shrivelled hand
Quivered a little more each time she shifted
The printed sheets. Then suddenly it came,—
A cry—a crash and down there fell this little crumpled thing.
They rushed about her—called her by her name,
But she had gone past all their beckoning.
The doctor came—"Starvation—yes; quite dead—
No slightest question. What were you about?
Could you not give her just a crust of bread?"
But she was rich, they said—there was no doubt.
"Starving and rich?" "She must be rich," they say—
"Quite rich— she took two papers every day!"

UNFAMILIAR QUOTATIONS

Fatalism is born of the fear of failure, for we all believe that we carry success in our own hands, and we suspect that our hands are weak. —*Joseph Conrad.*

The tree of knowledge must be watered with the tears of experience. —*Donn Byrne.*

It's so strange . . . that the worse people are themselves, the more they feel called upon to make others better.—*Johan Bojer.*

Men only abandon their vices when advancing years have made them a burden rather than a pleasure.—*Somerset Maugham.*

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